

# Dive Travel



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**BAJA:** *Cabo, La Paz and a Little Mambo Music*

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*Adventure in* **BRITISH COLUMBIA'S** *Emerald Sea*

*Probing Lusca's Lair in the* **BAHAMAS**



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# LANDFALL PRODUCTIONS

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P R E S E N T S

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—Anthony's Key Resort **\$642pp**  
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##### ST VINCENT DIVE EXPERIENCE

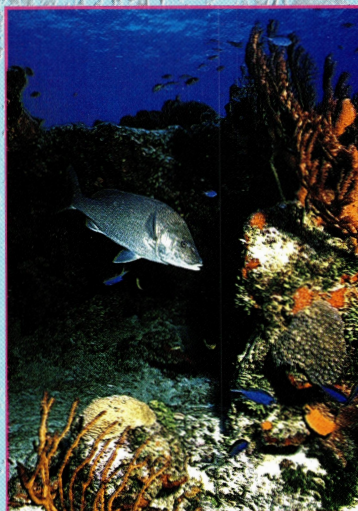
**2 FOR 1**

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## Wanted: Participants

In an election year, a time of pure and unadulterated hype, the system is virtually crying out for people who care about it, for participants. It's the only way a democracy can persevere.

It's really no different for us here at *Dive Travel*. From birthing the story idea to the final layout, from sending subscriptions to filing slides, it requires our participation. And wherever the day takes us, it usually has something to do with "doing the right thing." At every level of decision-making, we are trying to do right by our loyal constituents: subscribers, newsstand readers, divers all.

So here is our plea: Participate. We want you to help us form this publication, make it what you need and are looking for every few months. Same goes for *Dive Travel Express* and *Dive Travel Online*. We want to hear it NOW if things could be improved, altered or updated to make it yours.

Some have gotten involved. Take a look right here. There were thousands of applicants for our Red Sea contest sponsored by Moevenpick hotels and Egypt Air. And the winner is: Robert Ballance of Rockaway, New Jersey.

Same goes for our beach photo contest. We just had a few contestants that time, so everyone gets a gold star: Trudy Koller Anes, Peter F. Bousquet, and Jan and Sonja VanBuuren. Look on this page for the winner. And all of them will be published on our site on the internet: <http://www.divetravel.com>

Come to think of it, maybe contests and prizes would be a great way to get people to vote in this country. After all, it's starting to feel a lot like playing the lottery anyway!

*Susan Wilmink, Publisher*



**Clockwise from top: The maestro of Micronesia, Steve Rosenberg; Newman and Watrous pick the Red Sea contest winner; Photographer Susan Blanchet makes you want to be at the head of the Photoclass; BC adventurer Jett Brittnell in the shadow of a giant.**

## Wanted: Commitment

Allow me to paraphrase the famous anthropologist Margaret Meade. It's never too late, she said (or something close to it), to put your support behind thoughtful people committed to a worthwhile cause.

We've been thinking lately—especially in light of a couple of the articles in this issue—the East African dive guide, the Micronesia story—about landscapes, environments, that have been severely put to the test, strained to the ecological breaking

point. Sometimes industry is the culprit, or an increase in population that puts increased pressure on an ecosystem. The environmental issues and challenges of the twentieth century are numerous, and the solutions increasingly complex. When we read about the extinction of a lemur species in Madagascar, the declining shark population worldwide, or the

destruction of desert habitat in Baja, it's easy to lose hope, to throw in the proverbial towel on the whole project. What can I possibly do to make a difference? Start by using your voice and your influence as a traveler. Educate yourself about the region

where you'll be traveling; what are the issues and challenges the land and the people are facing? When you visit, let the people there know how much you appreciate local efforts to preserve habitat and animals in the ecosystem. Don't purchase souvenirs made from endangered plants or animals. Travel with companies, and stay at accommodations that promote environmental conservation. Subscribe to and patronize organizations that target special sites and ecosystems in which you have an interest. It's not too late. You will be one of the thoughtful people supporting worthwhile causes and making a difference.

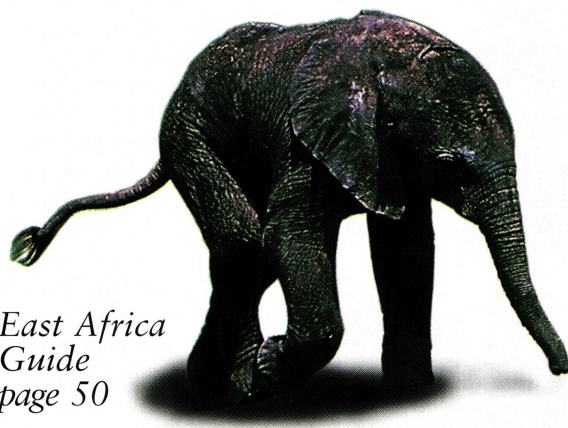
*Susan Watrous and John Newman, Editors*



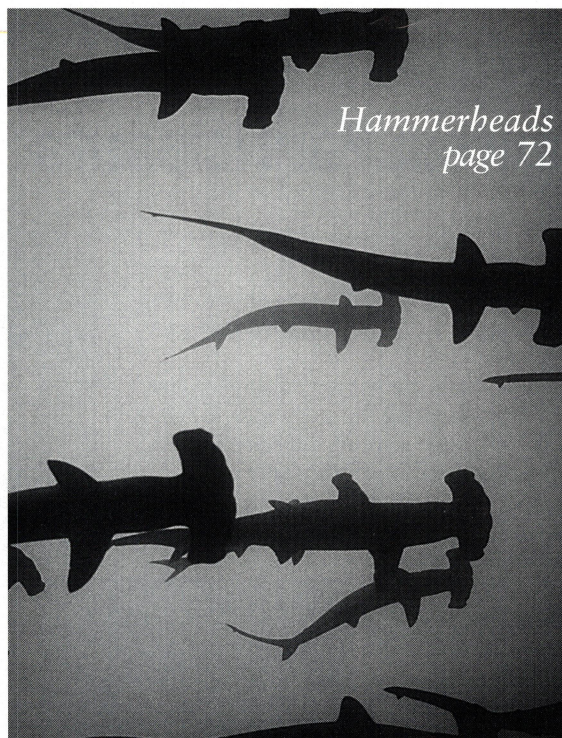
# DiveTravel

VOLUME XI NUMBER FOUR SUMMER 1996

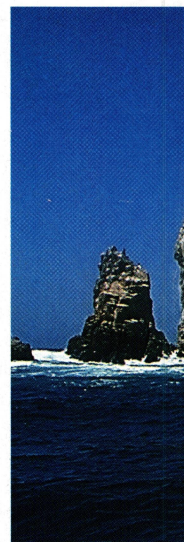
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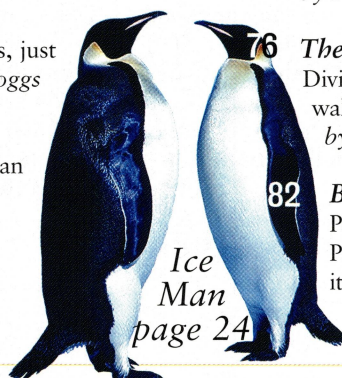


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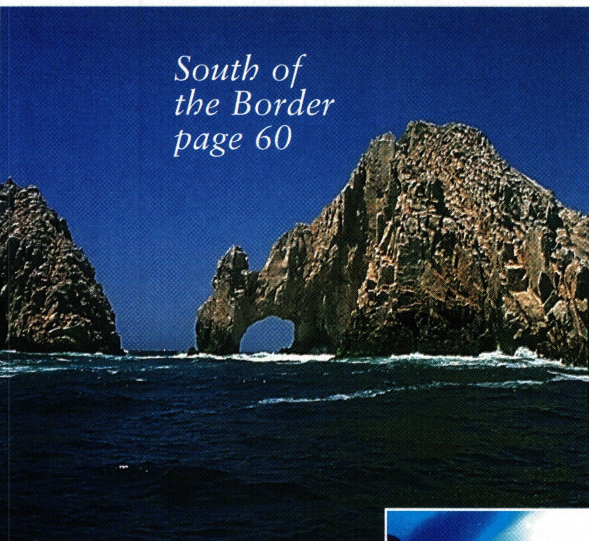
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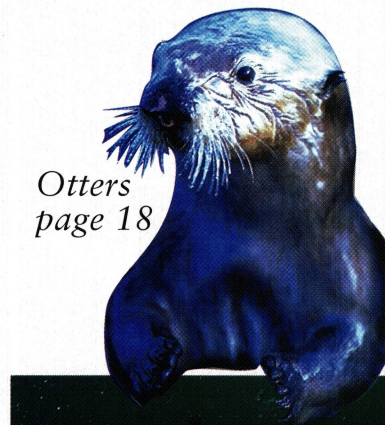




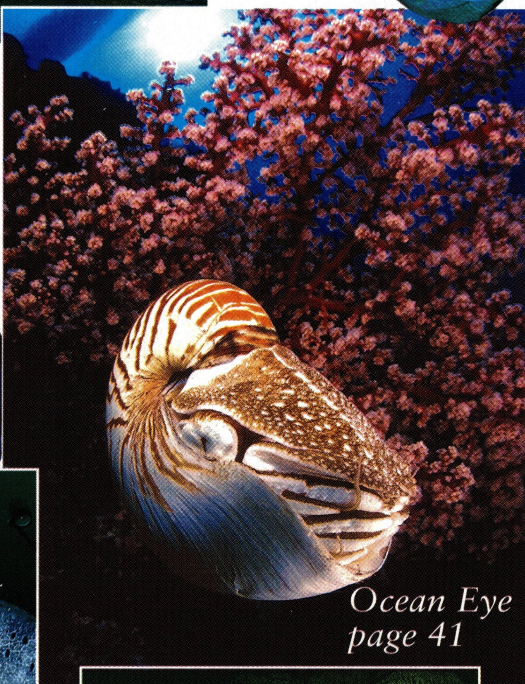
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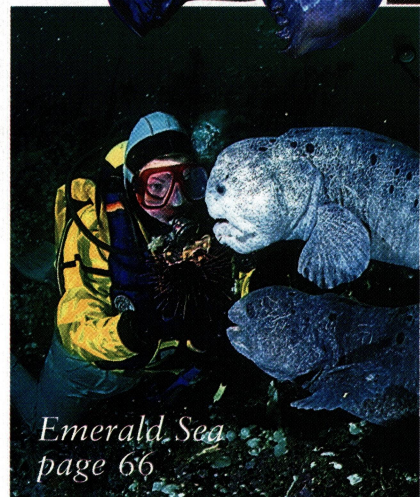
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**THIS MONTH'S COVER** is, obviously, a composite image of zebras in Kenya and schooling moorish idols in the Indian Ocean. Zebra photos by Marc Chamberlain and Norbert Wu. Moorish Idols by Stuart Westmorland. Digital manipulation by John Newman.

# DiveTravel

SUMMER 1996

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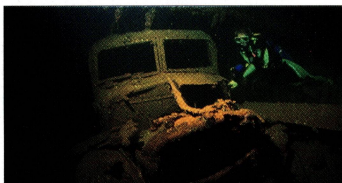
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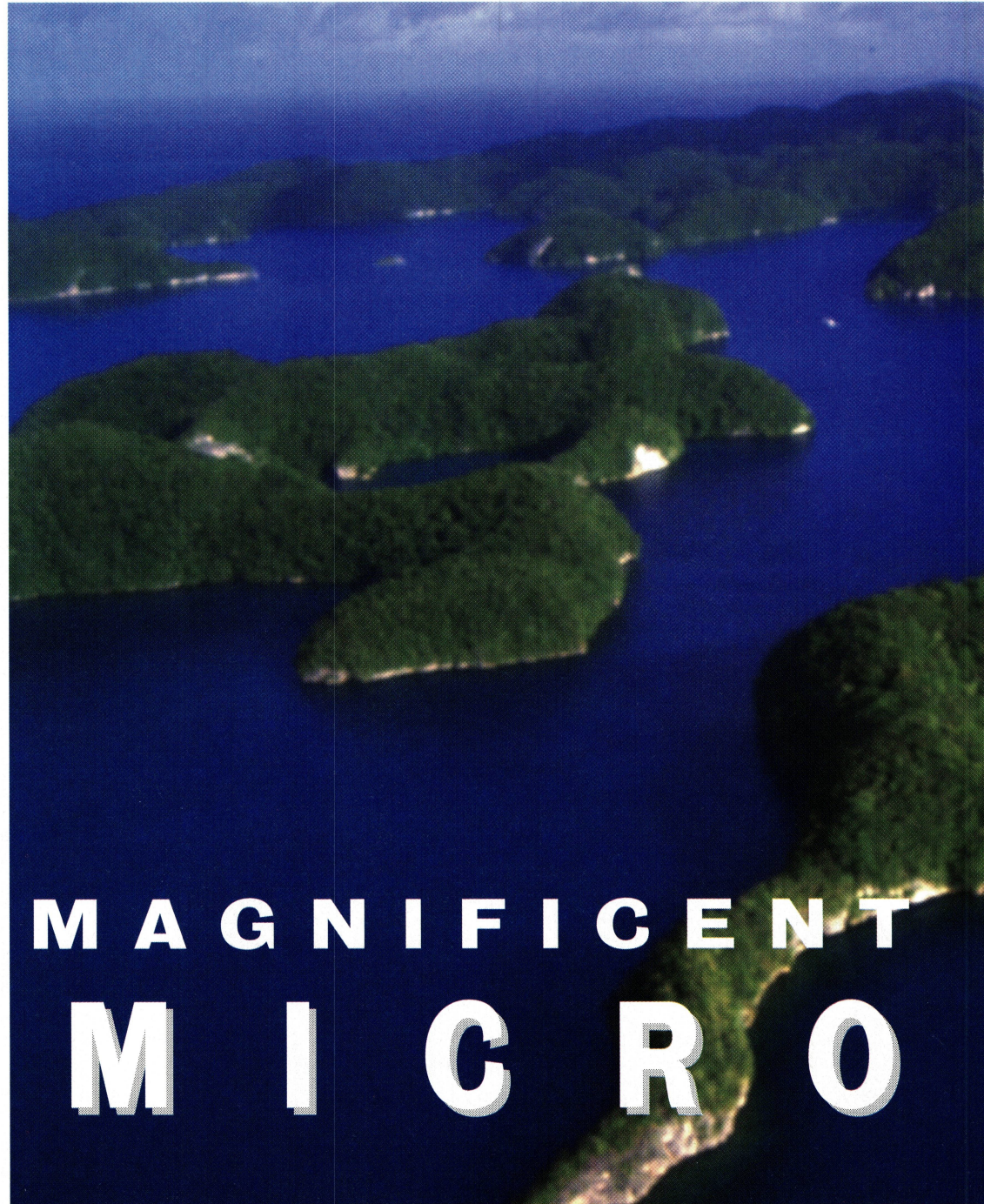
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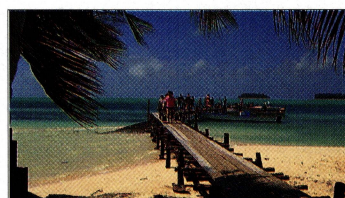
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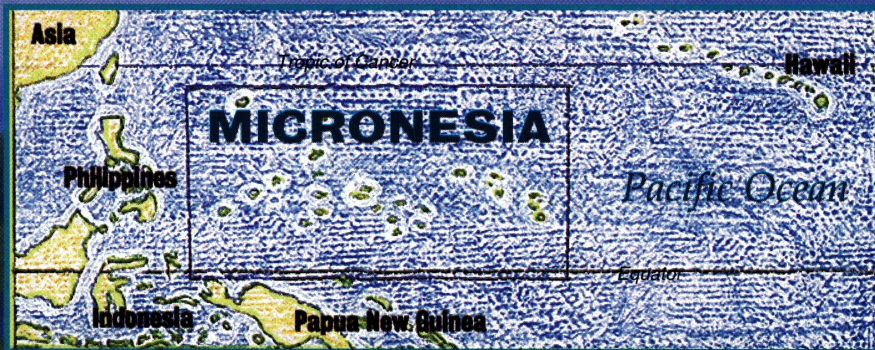
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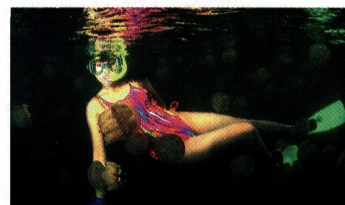
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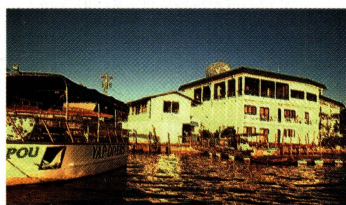
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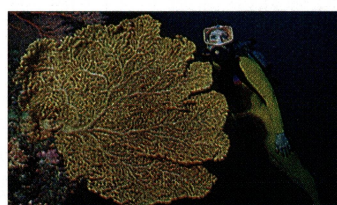
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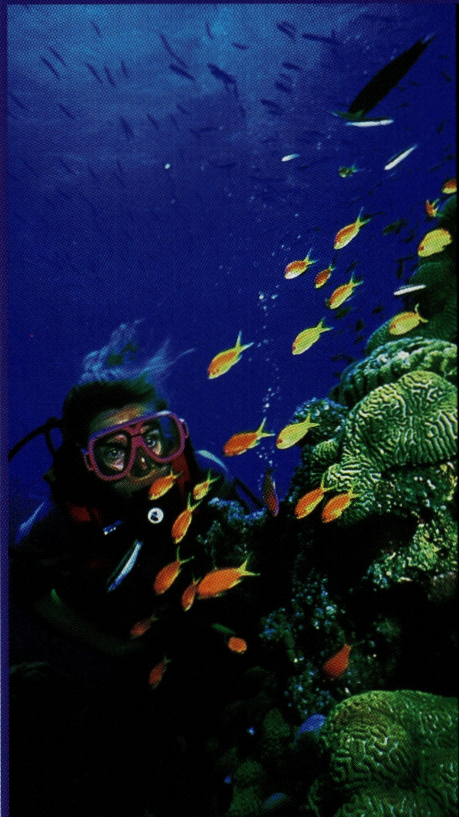
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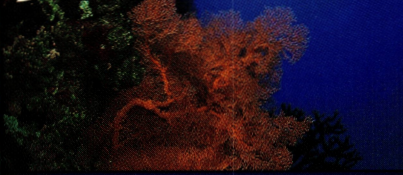
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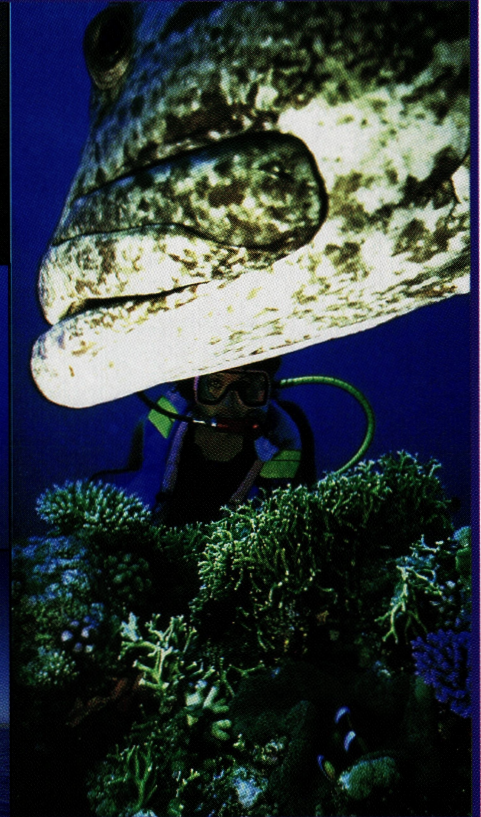
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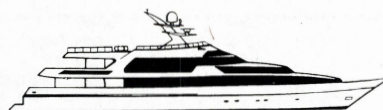
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# SOUNDINGS

HIGHLIGHTS • EVENTS • PROFILES • INDUSTRY NEWS

## CALENDAR

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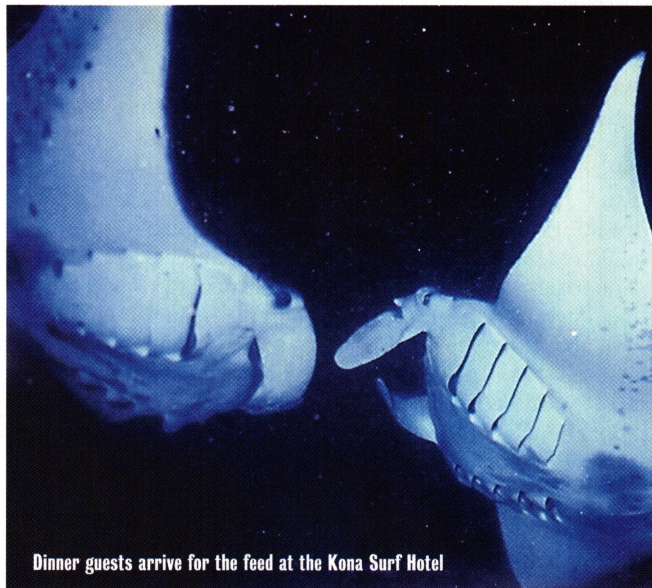
**September 16**  
**Baja California**



### Mexican

#### Independence Day

Get out your sombrero, your serape and get ready to party. While the 16th is the official independence day, count on celebrating the night before when townspeople everywhere gather for the grito—the anniversary of Father Hidalgo's ringing of the Mexican bell of independence.



Wendy Laros

## GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

In this world, there are hotels with heart-shaped beds, hotels that put mints on your pillow, and hotels where the bellpeople wear suits that look like an orangrinder's monkey.

And then there's the hotel with mantas.

The manta ray night dive at the Kona Surf Hotel on the Big Island of Hawaii is one of the best places to see wild manta rays up close and personal. Opened in 1971, the hotel perches atop a low, seaside cliff. From the roof, spotlights shine onto the ocean in the evening—it's a romantic vista for hotel guests. But that's not all. In the shallow water, the lights attract shrimp, lobster and crab larvae. These tiny, free-

swimming animals are a favorite food of reef fish. More importantly, the dense cloud of food lures manta rays in for an easy meal. For the past few years, dive operators have taken divers and snorkelers to this site to observe the creatures during their nightly feeding ritual. The mantas glide, pivot and somersault through the watery feast above the mesmerized divers.

The manta rays at the Kona Surf site, *Manta birostris*, have a wide head, a cavernous mouth with a faint tooth band resembling sandpaper on the lower jaw only, and no tail stinger. Like their relatives the sharks, they have cartilaginous skeletons. Using broad pectoral fins that have evolved

like wings, mantas propel themselves through the water. Capable of growing to twenty feet across, the mantas here range in size from three to twelve feet.

At the front of their bodies, two cephalic fins roll up or down to form either a wing or a protruding horn. When feeding, the mantas use the unfurled fin as a funnel for their mouths. When swimming, the fins curl up for a more streamlined profile. In the past, the horn-like appearance of the fins earned the mantas the name "devil ray."

Unique coloration, size, sex, scars and deformities are all employed to distinguish the members of the Kona manta clan. Since 1991, about 15 different mantas have been identified at the Kona Surf, many of them regulars. Young mantas are distinguished from older ones by size; babies are three feet across at birth. Over the past four years, three baby males have joined the regulars for the easy pickings.

Before the manta ray dive became so popular, there were few people who dived near the Kona Surf at night. Human contact was limited; a few divers stroked the mantas' abdomens as they

**"I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky, And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by, And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking, And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking."**  
From "Sea Fever,"  
by John Masefield



## CALENDAR

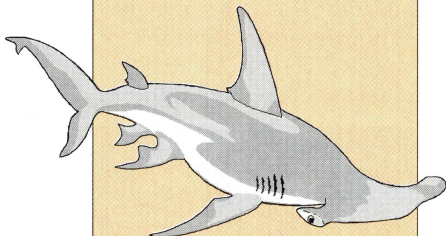
**June 24-26, 1996**  
**Big Island, Hawaii**



*The First Marine Ecotourism Workshop pulls together resource managers, government planners, tour operators, lodge owners, dive and boat operators who want to develop marine ecotourism, and individuals and communities who plan to work with this growing market. Workshop leader Bill Belleville is currently a researcher-writer for the Discovery Channel, its magazine and web site, as well as an Associate Editor for Sea Frontiers.*

*Elizabeth Halpenny  
 The Ecotourism Society  
 P.O. Box 755  
 N. Bennington, VT 05257  
 (802) 447-2121  
 fax: (802) 447-2122  
 email: ecotsocy@igc.apc.org*

**Oct. 11-20**  
**Rangiroa Shark Adventure**



*Join professional marine photographer Doug Perrine and marine biologist and shark specialist Dick Johnson for a truly spectacular and unique diving adventure in Rangiroa, French Polynesia. Trip limited to 15 divers. Price for dbl. occ, \$3,169. Call (800) 828-6877 for reservations and information.*

passed overhead. The shy mantas grew tolerant of divers and the dive gained in popularity. Articles in various dive publications spread the word. As the number of divers increased, the petting—gloved and bare handed—increased. Over time, raw patches began appearing on the animals' undersides. A search for information about the malady led to the Waikiki Aquarium where a marine scientist provided information about the thin coating of antibacterial slime on many marine creatures which repels infection. Removing this coating—by rubbing or petting, for example—opens the animals' skin to infection, an awareness that led to most dive operators requesting that divers not touch the

manta rays.

But it was one particular manta that led to the creation of solid guidelines for the manta ray dive. The first individual to be recognized, she came to be called Lefty because of her broken left cephalic fin. Since the broken fin makes it hard for her to eat, Lefty stayed to feed despite the fact that she was rubbed repeatedly—rubbed, in fact, to the point where her raw patches became sores. Sensing a need to protect Lefty, responsible members of the dive community, supported by PADI's Project: AWARE, The Ocean Recreation Council of Hawaii, and Scuba Display Specialties, produced a set of guidelines for divers on the Kona manta dive.

The mainstay of the guidelines prohibit riding,

grabbing or touching the mantas in any way, instead directing divers to form a circle on the bottom, giving the mantas an open water column in which to maneuver and feed.

Since the adoption of these guidelines in 1994, other weak and young manta rays have joined the Kona group. In this protected environment, young mantas have a chance to grow strong and healthy, and weaker or injured individuals gain—at least for the evening—a safe haven and a good meal.

By combining experience and education, we learn to protect and insure the existence of the manta ray, and by extension, the other creatures with whom we share this fragile biosphere.

—by Keller and Wendy Laros

## SMOKING ON AIRPLANES—NOT

*Will international flights soon be non-smoking, too?*

There are some issues that get argued til doom's day and never resolved. Abortion, the death penalty, and smoking. And this last one, the smoking debate, is polarizing puffers and anti-smokers all over.

As health and environmental issues take center stage, the reduction of second-hand smoke in the public domain has become a hot topic. Now it's spreading to the friendly skies.

With many cities around the globe implementing smoking bans in restaurants and public places, the airlines are following suit—and now it's finally gone international.

The lingering stench of cigarette smoke is not only a nuisance to non-smokers, it's been discovered that the smoke infiltrates

the planes' oxygen masks and air-control systems. More and more, international flights on most airlines are non-smoking.

The new restrictions in high-altitude smoking could quickly become a reality across the board. The United Nations recently proposed a worldwide smoking ban on all international flights, which, if successful, will be implemented in July 1996. Whether or not the ban would be successfully enacted

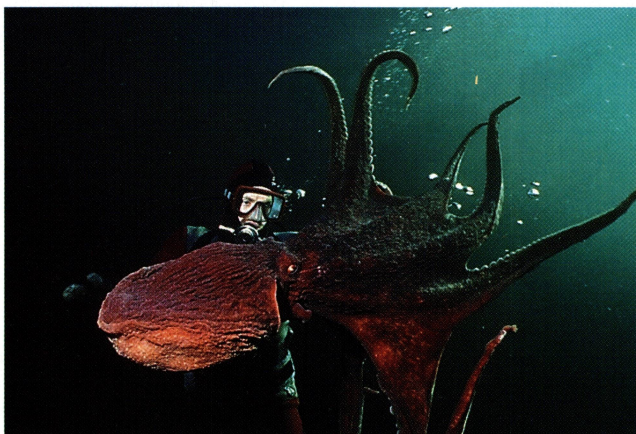
is questionable. Airlines may fear lost business on longer flights, and exceptions could be made.

As it stands, there are options. Die-hard (sorry about the pun) smokers still have several sanctuaries; TWA (international flights), ANA, Air India, Iberia and Aeroflot don't offer any non-smoking flights. Others like Air Canada, Air Jamaica and Delta are strictly non-smoking. The rest vary according to flight.

Do smokers really have the right to subject others to a toxic substance in such a confined space? Does the UN really have the right to yank away a smoker's rights? Valid questions, excellent points. We'll be watching the outcome with interest.







Dale Sanders

# THE EMERALD SEA

*It's multimedia—in hard cover*

In the high-tech world of multimedia presentations and movie screens that are six stories tall, it's easy to dismiss a book as old-fashioned, one dimensional, limited. But I want to suggest another possibility. Sometimes that old-fashioned marriage of images and text is multidimensional, a union of photographs that are visual poetry, homage to an environment not visible on the immediate horizon, text that educates and excites, and writing that miraculously lifts the reader into another mysterious and alluring world. *The Emerald Sea, Exploring the Underwater Wilderness of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska* is such a book.

Combining stunning photographs with prose that is both informed and environmentally sensitive, *The Emerald Sea* covers a stunning stretch of northwest coast. Photographer Dale Sanders and writer Diane Swanson have teamed up to document what is for both of these British Columbia residents, home.

With thirty miles of shoreline for every one mile the crow flies, the Pacific Northwest coast is the perfect place to explore the relationship between land and sea. That pairing is the subject of *The Emerald Sea's* first chapter, which chronicles the region's geological history and explores the relationship between topography, climate and marine life. It's also a natural departure point for the rest of the book, which includes dives into kelp-forested worlds where soft corals, the giant Pacific octopus and enormous anemones vie for the observer's eye. Massive quantities of plankton make these waters the emerald color they are—and support the dense populations of sea life so sensitively depicted in this book.

Vancouver-based photographer Dale Sanders has turned his considerable talents toward capturing this marine world in a vision which reflects a reverence for the natural world, as well as masterful photographic technique. And the partnership with Swanson's informative text makes this book a pleasure for the mind as well as the eye.

To order, contact the U.S. distributor, Graphic Arts Center, (800) 452-3032. The book is 147 pages, and sells for \$34.95 plus postage and handling.



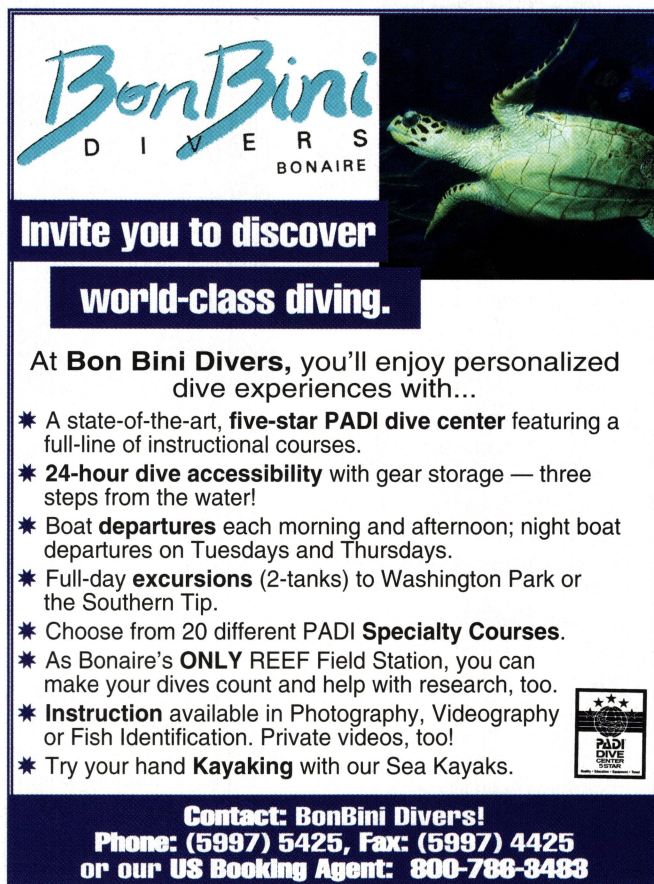
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## CALENDAR

**August 3, 1996  
Pearl Lake, IL.**

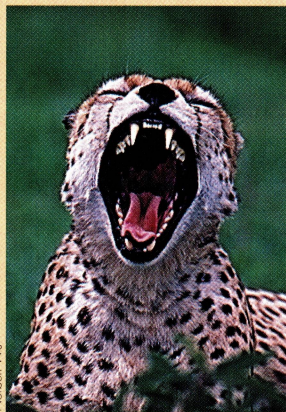
*A Freshwater Underwater Naturalist Specialty Workshop, taught by Shedd Aquarium's Keith Pamper, offers freshwater divers a class about the ecosystem in their own backyards—the lake, pond or quarry where they regularly dive.*

Pearl Lake

Greg Kent

(815) 389-1479

.....

**Aug. 11-30, 1996  
The Best of  
Kenya Safari**

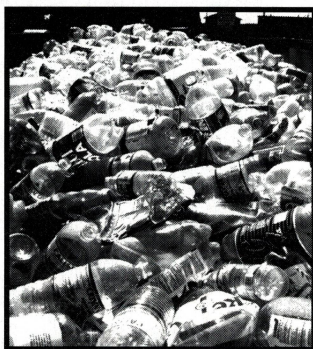
Norbert Wu

*A naturalist's expedition led by renowned photographer Norbert Wu to Kenya, home of the world's most prolific wildlife. At the height of the wildebeest migration, vast herds cross the plains of the Serengeti and Masai Mara—a time of spectacular natural happenings. Stay at five-star lodges in the parks and travel in uncrowded, four-passenger supervans offered only by Wildlife Safari, oldest Kenya safari operator. Special discounted airfare of \$2050 (when booked through Wildlife Safari) for round-trip travel from the U.S. to Nairobi. Land trip cost is \$3875. Trip limited to 14 participants.*

Noel at Wildlife Safari

(800) 221-8118

Fax: (510) 376-5059



John Newman

The preliminary results are in! The 1995 International Coastal Cleanup was again a success—2,305,424 pounds of garbage tallied so far.

Last September, volunteers in 42 states and 72 countries slapped on the rubber gloves, grabbed a handful of garbage and recycling bags, took pen and tally sheet in hand and hit the beach and the water.

# CMC CLEANUP

*Goodbye to pounds of garbage from above and below the waterline*

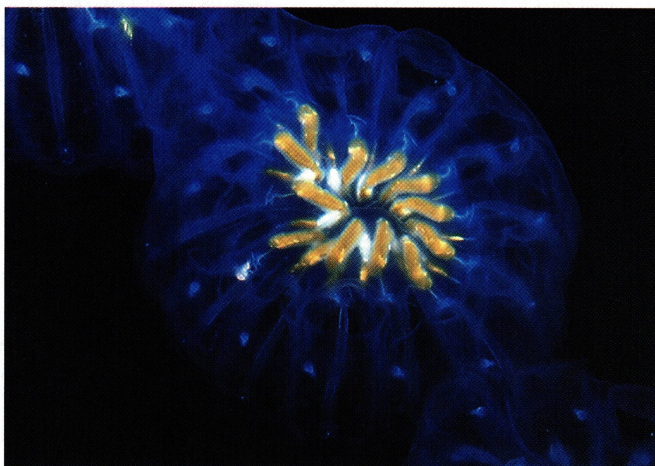
The results are even more interesting this year with the addition of the newest perspective in coastal cleanup—underwater. Over 7400 divers participated in the cleanup, collecting 164,599 pounds of trash.

Only preliminary results are in, with 67 percent of participants reporting. Grand totals will be announced at a June press conference in Washington DC.

As you may recall from the Winter 1996 issue of *Dive Travel*, our staff joined the coastal cleanup crew and were assigned our very

own stretch of beach along the central coast of California. Some of us got pummeled by incoming waves, some of us found some fascinating and disgusting items, but we all had a great time—definitely a feeling-good-by-doing-good activity.

Stay tuned for the total results and be sure to join the team next year for the International Coastal Cleanup. For more information on the cleanup, contact The Center for Marine Conservation, (800) CMC-BEACH.



Marc Chamberlain

## SALPS

*There's more to these thaliaceans than just a meal for mola molas*

Three summers ago, virtually every blue water dive off San Diego, my friends and I encountered salps. Each animal was two inches in height, attached to others in a ringlet, with each ring attached in bracelet fashion to one or several others. The rings were five or six inches across, and the bracelets ran

about one to two feet in length. While most salps are clear, these were blue-tinged. Floating in hundreds of feet of water, the salps drifted by in unbelievable numbers in the upper 30 feet of water. A magnificent and mysterious sight, it got me wondering...

Just what exactly is a salp? Classified as a vertebrate,

there are three common classes of tunicates in the ocean, the larvaceans, the ascidians (sea squirts) and the thaliaceans, which include salps. Worldwide, at least 1600 species of tunicates occur.

Thaliaceans are divided into three further subclasses: pyrosomes, doliolids and salps. Salps occur abundantly in cold and deep water, either as solitary individuals or linked into long chains. Typically divers encounter salps near deep oceanic water—offshore seamounts, for example, or submarine canyons. Along with jellyfish and ctenophores, salps constitute a portion of the macroplankton easily visible to the naked eye.

Diving in Point Lobos, California, several winters ago, I remarked to my wife on the outstanding visibility—it exceeded 80 feet that day. We changed tanks and returned to the water to find an invasion of doliolids. Every several inches of water contained an animal about the size of a walnut; it



reduced the visibility to 10 feet. This profusion of bite-sized animals was the main course for an enormous feast. Blue rockfish inhaled them, anemones stuffed their mouths, and starfish everted their stomachs to consume them. Salp carnage everywhere. It was awesome.

I like to describe salp anatomy and physiology as a basket (the body wall) within a basket (the pharynx), where water is directed into the inner basket, through one end and out the other. This movement of water, a sort of gulping action, allows salps to move through water, though as rather feeble swimmers.

A tough tunic unusually rich in a variety of cellulose called tunicin (hence the common name, tunicates) covers the humble salp. The tunic is secreted by the body wall, which is essentially a tube. Muscles and nerves are contained within the body wall such that tunicates can change shape, either in response to their environment, or during respiration and feeding.

Water is directed by surface hair cells in through the oral siphon and leaves through the cloacal siphon, having passed through the pharynx and atrial cavity. The pharynx captures particulate food from the water passing through. A salp may move several thousand times its body volume of water through the pharynx in a day.

But what about sex, you ask? These little beasts are hermaphroditic, containing both an ovary and testis. Each is served by its own duct which empties into the atrial cavity. Sexual reproduction gives rise to an individual that reproduces asexually. Asexual reproduction eventually leads to the appearance of sexual individuals, a so-called metagenetic life cycle. Each salp individual is capable of both sexual and asexual reproduction.

Everything you wanted to know about salps and then some. I know it's hard to believe, but that's all. Well, almost all. One final bit of salp trivia: Salps are the favorite food of the oceanic sunfish (*Mola mola*) and sea turtles. See, I'm not the only one who enjoys these critters.

—by Marc Chamberlain

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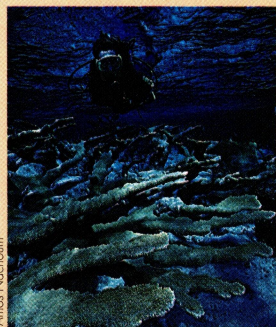
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## CALENDAR

**September 30-  
October 7, 1996**  
**The Bahamas**

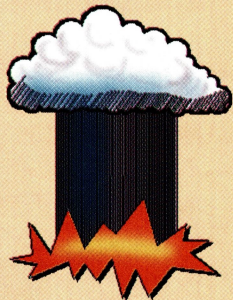


Amos Nachum

Divers from Boston's New England Aquarium are collecting fish in the Bahamas this fall aboard the R/V Coral Reef II. You can join them for this trip, traveling throughout the Bahamas and Bimini. Trip fees: \$2295 for non-Aquarium members.

**Holly Martel-Bourbon**  
Senior Diver/Aquarist  
(617) 973-5248

**June 1996**  
**Bikini Atoll**



This famous atoll in the Marshall Islands will be open to divers for the first time in 50 years. Between the months of April and November, 12 divers per week will be permitted to explore the historic shipwrecks of Bikini Lagoon. With this limited access, the Bikinians will be able to evaluate visitor's effect on the lagoon's environment and the area's economic status.

**Central Pacific Dive Expeditions**  
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# WATERLOGGED PROPOSAL

*Taking the plunge  
into marriage*



I tried to propose to my wife underwater. She almost drowned.

While planning the moment—the commitment many men fear most—I thought this would be a romantic way to tie the knot. Certainly, it would be a more intimate memory than the electronic message you often see on stadium scoreboards—"Ellen, will you marry me? Gil". After all, can you imagine how embarrassing it would be if she turned the guy down in front of 35,000 people?

So when the moment arrived four years ago to transform my girlfriend into my fiancée, I wanted a smaller, more private venue.

The first step was choosing a vacation site. We opted for a new dive resort along a quiet 10-mile strip of sand on Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos. Though it was only a half-mile from the bustling Club Med Turquoise, it was a world apart. Serene and romantic, it was perfect for a surprise underwater proposal.

There was just one small detail. My girlfriend wasn't a certified diver.

With some hesitation, she enrolled in a resort course. Though she thought she'd enjoy diving

because she loved swimming and snorkeling, she also had some reservations. "What if I don't like breathing through that mouthpiece

thing? How disappointed will you be? Will you resent me?"

Naturally, I couldn't share just how disappointed I'd be. I couldn't say, "Look! You've got to like it! I'm gonna ask you to marry me down there!"

I couldn't share my dream: We'd descend slowly along the anchor line. Every few feet, I'd use my hand signals

to ask, "Are you O.K.?" She'd nod and give me the signal.

When we reached our depth of 30 feet, I'd planned to ask again how she was doing. Next, I'd write on my slate, "How much air do you have left?"

She'd scrawl in the amount.

Then, I'd take a few big gulps of air and write, "Ellen, will you marry me?"

I'd be able to see her eyes brighten inside her mask... I'd see the corners of her mouth smile around her regulator... and she'd write, "Yes, oh yes, my dearest!"

We'd embrace. I'd have someone take our photo. We'd finish the dive, and go topside to start planning the wedding.

That was my dive plan.

However, every experienced diver knows that even the best plans are subject to change. During Ellen's resort course, she felt extremely claustrophobic trying to breathe in the hotel pool. Several times, she stood up, took the regulator out of her mouth and gasped for breath. The instructors reassured her everything was fine. But she hated it.

Fearful that I'd now reject her, Ellen sobbed on my shoulder. I comforted her. "Well," I thought, "let's move to Proposal Plan B."

The next day, we strolled along those miles of secluded beach and I popped the question. We were married seven months later in San Francisco, a half-mile from the Pacific Ocean.

—by Gil Zeimer

## What is a fish?

"Don't laugh at this question, it isn't as easy as it sounds. "Fish" covers a wide variety of animals, many of which have little in common with each other. Here try this. Try to think of some characteristic that all fishes have in common. Go on, don't be afraid, no one is reading this. *Scales?* No, lots of fishes are scaleless. *Fins?* How about eels. No fins. *Jaws?* Nope, hagfish and lampreys are jawless. *Okay, how about eyes?* Blind cave fish and hagfish don't have them. *Well, they all breathe in water.* Yes and no. All fish are capable of breathing underwater, but many are capable of breathing in air and a few, such as the mudskipper, may drown if you keep them underwater. *What about a well-developed sense of the absurd?* That is only found in fishes living near Southern California or Big Sur."

—from *Probably More Than You Want To Know About The Fishes Of The Pacific Coast*, by Robin Milton Love



# NOTES FROM THE UNDER- GROUND

*Dear Friends...*

Last year, when we launched Dive Travel Magazine Online, we had an official housewarming party, complete with bowls of onion dip and our wacky Uncle Bamboula holding court on the deck. A good time was had by all. We could have settled in then, coasted for a while, rested on our collective laurels and enjoyed the compliments ("Nice house, is this couch a pull-out?" "Where's the TV?" "Are these all the CDs you have?"). But we're famous for our restless nature—hey, we're travelers, aren't we? (In fact, a first grade teacher once commented to Mr. Wilmlink, "Your daughter is a social butterfly, there's nothing we can do to get her to sit still.")

So here we are, redecorating all ready....new counter tops, slipcovers for the beach chairs, two pull-out couches this time around. We're giving our beach-house-on-the-internet a little facelift. But it's not purely aesthetic, we're talking a Bauhaus renovation, form following function. We've improved the way the site works, added a couple of levels to access, and maximized the speed you can attain while viewing the magazine. Check out the site's new control panel, the text-based table of contents, or lunge straight for the classified database for our latest and greatest deals. We have a couple of hot spots where you can speak your mind: Interface, a place for commentary; and Dr. Love's column, a place to ask that infamous marine expert all the questions you want; plus coming soon, a spot for shutterbugs.

Stay tuned to Dive Travel Magazine Online's houseparty. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

*The Dive Travel Staff*

**Our website address:**  
**<http://www.divetravel.com>**

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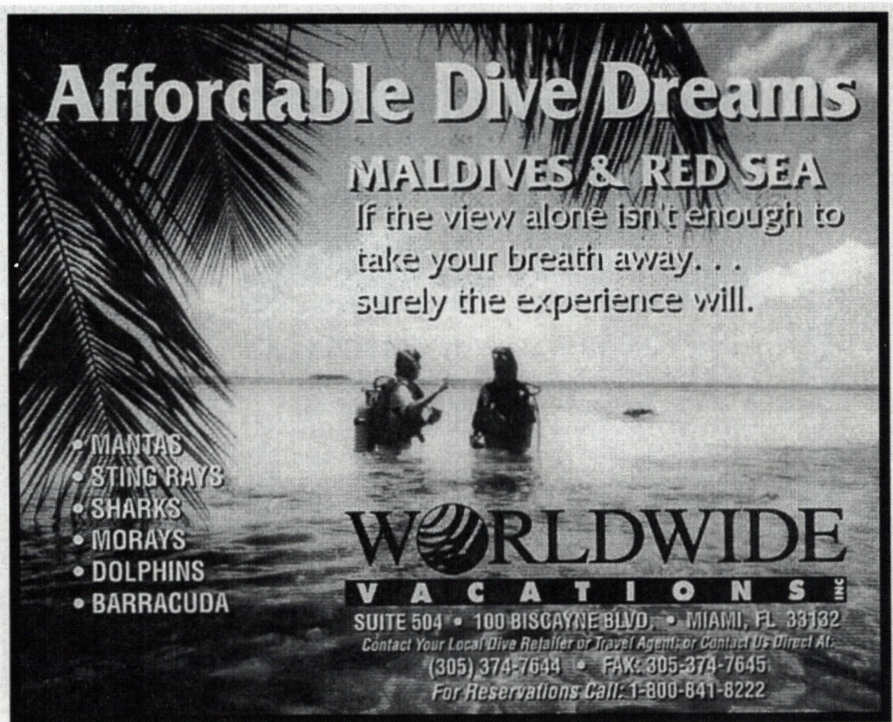
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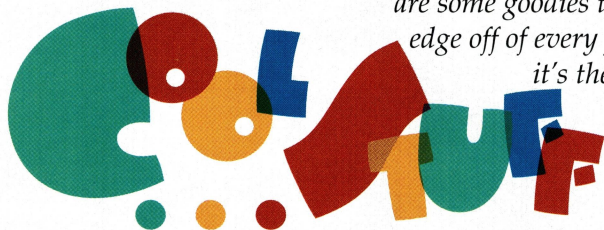
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## SOUNDINGS

*Travel warriors beware, divers, eyes open—here are some goodies to take the ragged edge off of every journey, whether it's the wet or dry part.*



### DOWN LEGS, DOWN

There are days and places when you just can't seem to stay neutral or evenly buoyant because your legs and fins keep floating up. They push you upside down and your lower back starts to strain, pain and twist into a muscular pretzel? Kiss the floating fins goodbye. Durward's Ankl Weights help to redistribute the weight, taking the stress off the lower back, and keeping your legs and fins down where they should be.

Ankl Weights come in a variety of sizes and colors and can even be custom made. But their biggest advantage: price. They retail for about \$22—a good deal for making your diving more comfortable and easy.

**McNett Outdoor**

(360) 671-2227 Fax: (360) 671-4521



### JUST LIPIT, LIP IT GOOD...

No, it isn't an '80's retro DEVO tune making a comeback. It's a hot dive and outdoor recreational accessory.

LipIt, from Hot Products, is a handy little pod that attaches to your watchband or mask, perfect for storing

sunscreen, anti-fog solution, even o-rings. The LipIt comes in a single

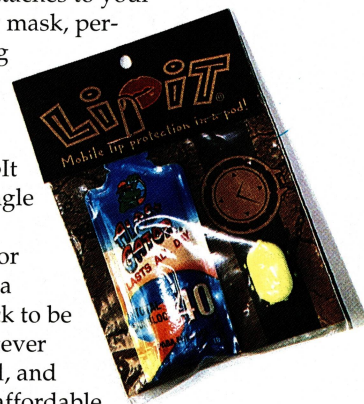
pod complete with AloeGator sunscreen, or a three-pod pack to be used for whatever

you may need, and retails for an affordable \$5.95. No need to worry about cumbersome containers or going unprotected, just strap that little puppy on and go.

**Hot Products**

(800) 66-LIPIT

Fax: (910) 791-9283



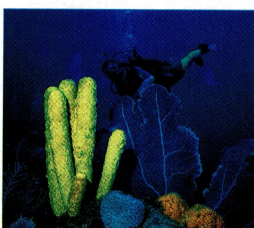
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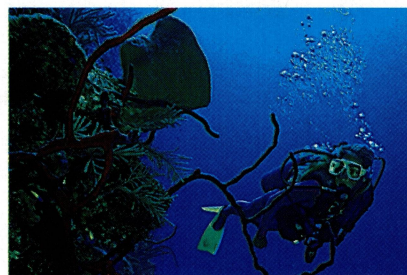
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*The eminent marine biologist answers your questions, tells you more than you probably wanted to know and brings greetings from Zoxxar and the Kwarkarkians*

# OTTERS SUCK

*From stuffed toys to coffee mugs and license plates, the fussy visage of the southern sea otter charms everyone... well, almost...*

I'm not overly fond of sea otters. There, I said it and I'm glad. In fact, I am more than glad. Suddenly I have the lightness of spirit normally reserved for winning Olympic athletes, pilgrims in sight of the Promised Land and the criminally insane. Yes, yes, I know otters are cute, with their squashed-in faces, hand-like paws and black button noses. And yes, I have seen all those adorable little mannerisms—the paw-waving, the supercilious smiles, the grooming—all of which inevitably evoke ooshy-gooshy responses in easily swayed humans. I also realize they are a growth industry in Central California; tourists gobble up sea otter curios like so much jalapeño-flavored popcorn. Every bar in Monterey offers Sea Otter Margaritas, every trinket shop sells battery-operated plastic sea otter dolls, and every department store pushes Mother and Baby Sea Otter garlic shredders made out of genuine redwood burl.

I still think otters are overrated. Now, I don't want a flood of anguished letters calling me bad names and casting aspersions on my character. For one thing, there's not much to cast aspersions on. So, save yourself some time. I'm not suggesting we turn otters into hats. I just think the hoopla is overblown.

And why don't I slobber all over these furry little creatures, these cuddly denizens that look like something straight out of some aquatic *Lord of the Rings*? Well, friends, it

comes down to a simple thing called Values. That's right, it all comes down to Values and, more particularly, to the obvious lack of values displayed by sea otters. Let's just look at a few of the more egregious examples.

## No Self Control

What can I say? This is supposed to be the Age of Self Control. From governments to individuals, the cry rings out, "Live within your means. Show some restraint." Do sea otters exhibit such responsibility? I think not.

Needing to eat about 25 percent of their body weight per day, sea otters, perhaps better labeled "Sea Shrews" or "Sea Rats," spend much of their time just getting enough to eat. An average adult otter needs at least two tons of food per year. Otters are extremely efficient predators, feeding on a wide range of invertebrates, particularly abalone, sea urchins, crabs, mussels and clams. It is likely that once otters make it big in southern California, the lobster population will take a header. When times get tough, they start in on relatively poor food resources, such as sand dollars and starfish. Where otters live, most large invertebrates are small and uncommon.

So what happens when otters have eaten most of the available prey in an area, as occurs in Alaskan waters? Well, some animals leave the area and some starve to death. So much for self control. Next thing you know, otters will be trying to get on the public dole.



## No Family Values

Here in the United States of the late 20th century, what could be more topical, more important than family values? I wish I had a nickel for every time a political candidate, media pundit or convicted felon radio personality intones some little homily about Family Values.

Well, when it comes to sea otters, just forget it. What kind of values are displayed when males hold pups for ransom until the mothers give them food? That's right, male otters will often grab pups away from their mothers and only give them up when mom comes forth with some seafood. And what can I say about a species whose males steal food from all other otters, females steal food from other females, and pups rip off their mothers?

Is there no end to their perfidy?

## Lots of Kinky Sex

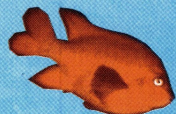
I have saved this for last because, quite frankly, it contains material that is not for the faint of heart. If you are underage, underweight, under a doctor's care, under glass, or if tales of strange sex acts disturb you, please close your eyes until I tell you to

*Continued on page 20*



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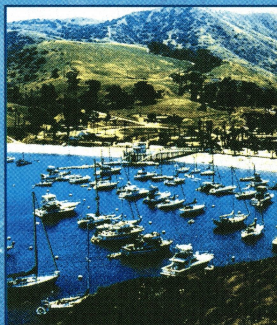
Phone: 310-510-1520

Fax: 310-510-7606

Box 217-Dive, Avalon, CA 90704



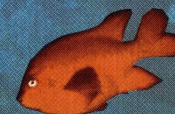
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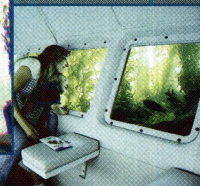
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- Tanks and weight belts are included for all boat dives
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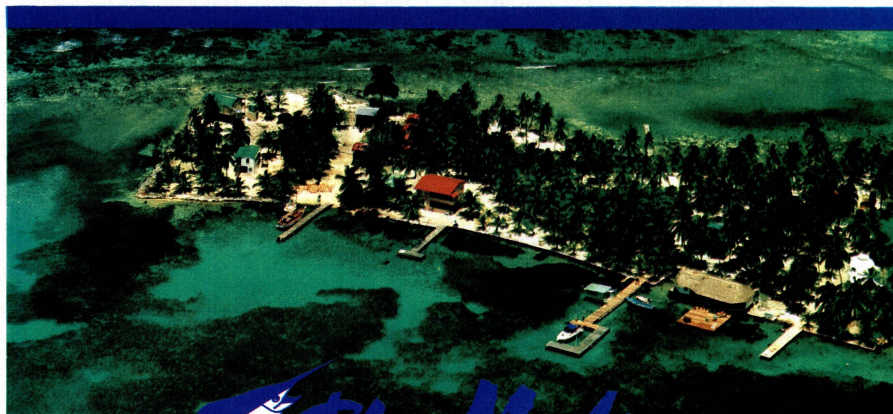
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ISLANDS FROM THE SKY JIMMIE C. SMITH



Basically, we have it all here waiting for you. We want to share our sanctuary with you, so loosen your tie, kick off your shoes, and wiggle your toes in the sand because we don't have any telephones or traffic out here, just clear blue Caribbean as far as the mind can wander. We welcome you to **Blue Marlin Lodge!** Come and enjoy...our island is your island.

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ALL INCLUSIVE—\$995 per person/Dbl Occ

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*Otters, continued from page 18*

open them. On the other hand, if you are like most Americans, remember to blink at least occasionally.

At the outset, let's make it clear that even regular mating between otters is just plain revolting. A male will often bite a female's nose and hold on for dear life. Sometimes females die from the experience. But we have yet to reach the ne plus ultra level of disgust. You would think that the demise of your love interest might put the kibosh on mating, but male otters are so single-minded, so utterly testosterone-drenched, that they sometimes continue mating with a dead female.

Now where are those ooshy-gooshy feelings?

I hesitate to mention this next story, but I am a biologist and thus legally obligated to bring you Truth. According to a paper by B.B. Hatfield et al (*Marine Mammal Science*, 1994, vol. 10, pp. 114-116), off the coast of Southern California, male sea otters have attempted to have sex with, well, harbor seals. I know, I know, this is illegal in every state in the Union, except, perhaps, Mississippi, but are we really surprised to hear that Sea Rats are capable of this?

Between 1989 and 1992, an otter named BB tried to mate with six newly weaned seals at San Nicholas Island. The otter would pounce on each animal, seize it with his mouth and forepaws, then try to have his way. Nothing much seemed to happen and after a while "interactions with harbor seals were usually interrupted when BB released the seals to groom, although seals did occasional struggle free." So, not only did BB abduct defenseless harbor seals and try to make free with them, he would also soon throw them over in favor of combing his hair. There are so many examples of poor role modeling here I am at a loss to know where to begin.

Okay, you can open your eyes again, the worst is over.

Well, I hope this brief excursion into the dark side of old Cute 'n Cuddly has made the point. But, just to be sure, here is a little ditty to bring it all home.

## You Otter Be Careful

*A sea otter to me once jeered,  
"We're just the species you feared.  
We're cute, but rapacious,  
Completely voracious,  
And practice sex acts that are weird."*



# Resort **Report** & Liveaboard **Update**

► *New, remodeled and improved, what's up with diving accommodations around the world*

## The Guest House **Maui**



**The Guest House Bed & Breakfast**  
**Address:** 1620 Ainakea Rd.  
 Lahaina, HI 96761  
**Phone:** (800) 621-8942  
**Fax:** (808) 661-1896

The Guest House Bed & Breakfast is perfect for romantic, tropical getaways. What better way to celebrate a honeymoon, anniversary or intimate dive holiday than in a lush, Hawaiian B&B? Stay in comfortable style, feel at home while enjoying some excellent diving, snorkeling and more. Definitely the cure for those high-rise hotel blues.

**A/C**—yes

**Dive Shop**—not on site, however, rental equipment is available.

**Pool**—yes

**Prices**—Prices vary from \$55 per night, single with a shared bath; \$59 per night, double with a shared bath; \$85 per night, single, private bath; \$89 per

night, double, private bath.

**Rental Equipment**—yes, on site and the equipment is included if diving with Guest House staff.

**Restaurant**—no, cooking in house plus numerous restaurants in Lahaina

**TV**—yes, and VCR with remote

**Transfers**—none

**Other**—The Guest House Bed & Breakfast will make arrangements for a discount on a rental car and offer a locked-in, one-time price for repeat customers. The Guest House also offers a private jacuzzi, ceiling fans in the rooms, room refrigerators, private phones, private lanai, laundry facilities, honeymoon suites and a full breakfast.



## The Carolines **Palau**

**Address:** Box 399, Koror, Palau 96940  
**Phone:** (011) 680-488-3754/55; **Fax:** (011) 680-488-3756

Private bungalows inspired by Palau's traditional architecture, each with a great view and breakfast served in your room.

**A/C**—yes

**Private bath**—yes

**Private balcony**—yes

**Refrigerator**—yes

**Mini Bar**—yes

**Dive Shop**—no, uses Sam's Tours

**Pool**—no

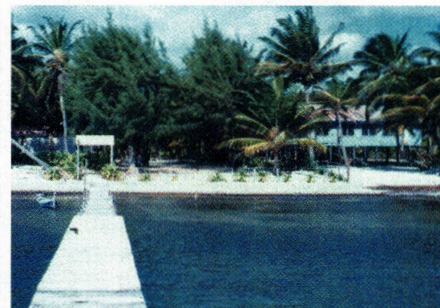
**Restaurant**—no

**Transfers**—included

**Other**—shopping tours, snorkeling, kayaking, tennis courts, private beach, fitness center.

## Mid South Properties **Belize**

**Mid South Properties**  
**Address:** 501 W. Clinch  
 Suite 101  
 Knoxville, TN 37902  
**Phone:** (423) 523-7375  
**Fax:** (423) 523-7415



So you've been through the Resort Reports time after time and nothing seems to hit the spot. This one is too big or too small. The other one is too expensive and doesn't have a gym for your daily workout. You're tired of having to compromise on one thing or the other.

Well, here's something a little different—a create-it-yourself resort.

Mid South Properties is listing beachfront property in beautiful Caye Caulker, Belize, just minutes from

some of the world's best diving. This location is perfect for a small hotel, cabanas, a time-share project, whatever your dream may be.

Retire, invest or develop—it's your future. Live out your twilight years on your very own dive resort in Belize, or simply make an investment in dive-dedicated fun.

Mid South Properties will sell, lease, trade or accept joint ventures for this little slice of paradise. Just make an offer!



# Laguna Beach Resort **Utila**

1004 Jaquelyn St., Abbeville, LA 70510; Phone: (800) 66-UTILA; Fax: (318) 893-5024

A/C—available upon request

Dive Shop—yes

Pool—no

Prices—Packages for divers and non-divers. Non-divers: \$600 per person, per week, dbl occ; \$750 single. Divers: \$750 per person, per week, dbl occ; \$935 single. Daily rates available ranging from \$90 per day, non-diver and \$115 diver.

Rental Equipment—yes, with storage and

rinse tanks

Restaurant—yes, full service with three buffet-style meals included daily

TV—no

Transfers—included

Other —E-6 processing, watersports, open water certification (\$189, all-inclusive) are available. Dive rate includes: three boat dives daily, two night boat dives weekly and unlimited shore diving.



# Pacific Skylight Hotel **Pohnpei**

P.O. Box 1678

Kolonia, Pohnpei, FSM 96941

Phone: (011) 691-320-3672

Fax: (011) 691-320-3708

A/C—yes, all rooms

TV—yes, all rooms have HBO

Prices—\$75-135 per night

Rental Equipment—yes

Dive Shop—uses Phoenix, Let Ehu Tours and Blue Oyster

Pool—yes

Restaurant—yes, international cuisine featuring seafood and steak

Transfers—yes

Other—offers car rentals and plane tours. Weight room and barber shop available to guests. Evening poolside buffet. Weekly performance of local dance. Front desk available to serve guests 24 hours a day.



# Tamarind Beach **The Grenadines**

Address: Charlestown, Canouan Island

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Fax: (809) 458-8851

A 48-room beachfront resort on a three-mile-long island in the Grenadines

Prices—per week (7 nights) \$950 dbl occ.; \$1250 single; for non-diver sharing rm \$525. Includes three meals daily, welcome drink, 10 dives (two per day) and all equipment. (Does not include wetsuit

or cameras)

Private bath—yes

Private balcony—yes

A/C—no

Mini Bar—yes

Pool—no

Dive Shop—yes

Rental Equipment —yes

Restaurant—yes, all meals included

Transfers—included

Other—Sailing, fishing, windsurfing, snorkeling, tours.

# Wyndam Morgan Bay Resort **St. Lucia**

Address: P.O. Box 2167, Choc Bay

Gros Islet, St. Lucia, W. I.

Phone: (800) WYNDHAM

Fax: (809) 450-1050

A/C—yes

TV—yes, satellite channels

Phone—yes, direct dial

Dive Shop—on site-Dive Fair Helen

Pool—yes

Prices—Dive packages, pp. dbl occ. Standard: 5 ngs \$730; 7 ngs \$1060;



Superior: 5 ngs \$805; 7 ngs \$1165;

Deluxe: 5 ngs \$880; 7 ngs \$1270.

Rental Equipment—yes

Restaurant—yes, two on site: the Palm Grill and Tradewinds, plus pasta bar.

Transfers—included

Other —Golf, rainforest tours, car rental, sailing, fishing, snorkeling, horseback riding, tennis, volleyball, waterskiing, windsurfing, fitness center, steam room, jacuzzi, nightly entertainment, wedding packages, day care.



# The World's Best SNORKELING & Free Diving

## HAWAII

### Kealakekua Bay, Kona

★★★

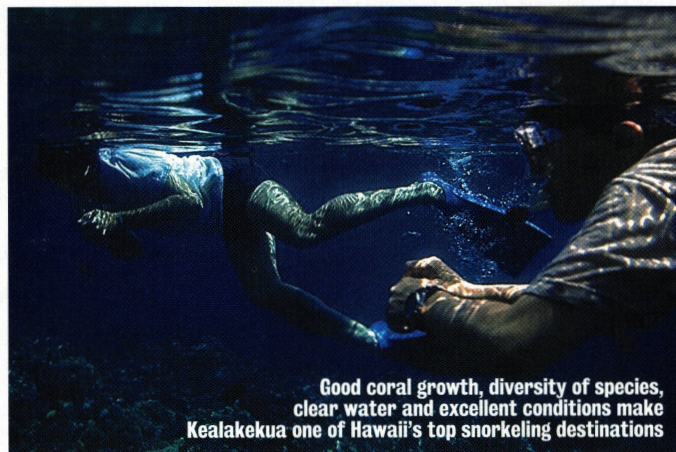
**H**alfway along the Kona coast, on the island of Hawaii, lies a small bay famous as the last stand of the great navigator, Captain Cook, haunt of the popular god, Lono, and the celebrated in song for its free-swimming humuhumunukunukuapua'a (the Picasso triggerfish to you haoles). It also happens to be one of Hawaii's best snorkeling sites and a state underwater park, rich in natural, as well as political, history.

The best stuff lies at the north end of the bay just in front of the Cook monument, but getting there is a bit of a challenge. This flat point of land is isolated by steep, rugged cliffs. A narrow, poorly marked trail descends the pali from the town of Captain Cook. You might make it on foot, but you won't make it in your rental car. Don't even think about it. One easy solution is to book one of the many organized boat tours out of Kailua. Several dive shops and many hotels and even condos offer tours. They'll whisk you down the coast on one of their sleek power

boats and generally provide your gear and lunch. The compromise, of

course, is that you operate on their time table and can expect to be churning the water with a large pod of your fellow *Homo sapiens*. For a more individual experience, proceed south by car from Kailua on the Mamalahoa Highway then take Napoopoo Road from Captain Cook to Kealakekua Bay Park on the south end of the bay. From here your transportation options are strictly aquatic. Some rugged individuals have crossed the mile of open water with nothing more than a strong freestyle, but a better idea is to rent a sit-on-top kayak in the parking lot. Keep your eyes open for flying fish skipping over your bow and a pod of spinner dolphins that make the bay their home. Beach your boat on the rocks to the left of the monument.

Kealakekua has some of the best coral growth in Hawaii. It dots the lava slope down to a white sand basin at about 100 feet. Once you hit the water off the small concrete quay, you can expect to be mugged by big schools of sargent-majors, black durgelon and yellow tangs—all habituated to hand-outs from visiting snorkelers. Beyond them you'll find most of the usual residents going about their business among the coral heads and rocky crevices. One of the most inter-



John Newman

Good coral growth, diversity of species, clear water and excellent conditions make Kealakekua one of Hawaii's top snorkeling destinations

### Marine life

THE WATERS OF HAWAII ARE HOME TO about 600 species of coral reef fish and 150 species of coral. Many of them can be seen at Kealakekua including a number of species endemic to the islands—the little Hawaiian puffer, the whitespot damsel, Hawaiian sargent major, saddle wrasse, Hawaiian cleaner wrasse and milletseed butterfly fish are all common here, but found nowhere else in the world. Sea turtles are very common here as well, as they are along the entire length of the Kona coast.

esting can be found in shallow water right at your feet—a big yellow-margin moray, also well habituated to divers, who can be coaxed out of its home under a coral head with a little gentle patience.

From the monument, work your way back toward the pali as far as you dare. The shallow shoreline coves offer plenty of interesting marine life. When you reach the base of the cliffs the shoreline heads south and drops off steeper and deeper. This is interesting territory for the more experienced snorkelers and bona fide free-divers. Lots of interesting things hang out along the wall. Some folks have even reported sighting sharks out in the blue water, but don't count on it.





# The Ice Man Cometh

*Where marine biologist John Heine goes diving, the water is exactly one-tenth of a degree above freezing solid. Brrrrrr....*

by Susan Watrous

Spring sun warms the asphalt in the parking lot of Moss Landing Marine Laboratory where John Heine prepares equipment for his coming expedition. A heavy-duty drill powered by a scuba tank buzzes in the salty air. He tests the trigger and the drill bit twists again, then slows. At close range, an observer might notice that Heine is growing a beard. It's a lit-

**Here's one for science—John Heine jumps in just short of solid at  $-1.8^{\circ}\text{C}$**



tle scraggly at the moment, perhaps a week's worth of hair the same color as the sun-shot curls on his head. Where Heine is going, the beard is also part of his equipment. "In Antarctica," he says, "when the wind's blowing and it's really cold, it's nicer to let it freeze on your beard than on your face."

A week from this California morning, with the scent of newly plowed fields behind the bustle of the nearby fish-packing plants, marine scientist John Heine will plunge beneath ten feet of Antarctic ice, a part of his ongoing research in one of the least hospitable—and most pristine—environments on this planet.

Protected since 1959 by an international treaty, signed—at this date—by 38 nations, Antarctica's 5.4 million square miles are reserved for peaceful purposes only, with free access for scientific investigation. When Heine worked on the frozen continent in 1989, '92 and '93, he completed studies in marine organism's chemical defenses, the protection animals and plants employ to keep from getting eaten.

# The Edge

## Man, that kelp forest is way too cool

*You know the northern waters are rich with a fantastic diversity of marine life, but visions of hypothermia are putting a chill on your sense of adventure. Fear not. Tug on a dry suit, you'll be fine.*

by Steven M. Barsky

You'd have to be nuts to jump in that Frigidaire." During 30 years of underwater exploring I've met many divers in the tropics who tell me they never dive in the States for just that reason: The water is simply too cold. It's a shame. They're never finned through a kelp forest, submerged with orcas and sea lions, or investigated the shipwrecks of the Great Lakes—some of the greatest adventures in diving. With the right thermal protection, these activities can be enjoyed in complete comfort, even in the coldest water. Just add a dry suit to your diving equipment.

**If the water is colder than  $65^{\circ}$ , or if you spend an extended period of time in the water, consider a dry suit.**

To get the most from cold water diving, you must have the proper insulation. For waters warmer than  $65^{\circ}$ , a wetsuit will suffice; however, if the water is colder than  $65^{\circ}$ , or if you spend an extended period of time in the water, consider a dry suit.

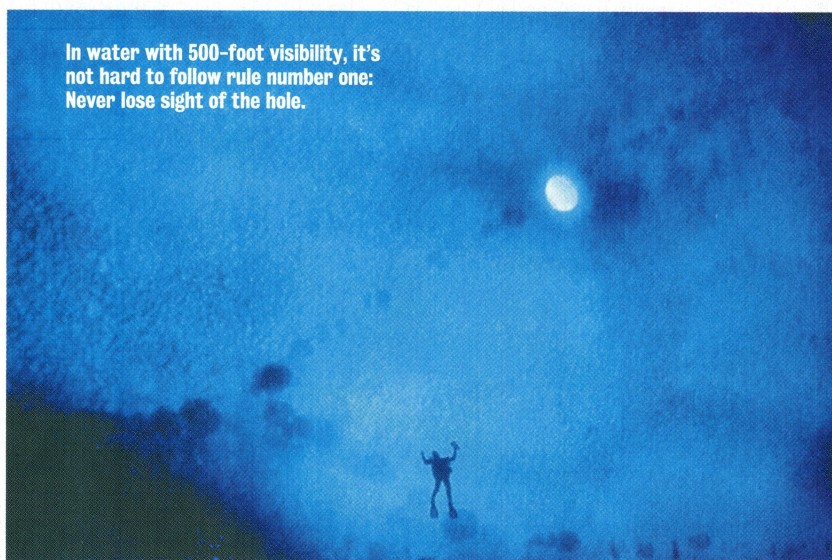
Made from foam neoprene, a synthetic rubber, wetsuits are designed to fit skintight, leaving the smallest space possible between the inner surface of the suit and your skin. Water enters this space and is warmed by your body.

In contrast to wetsuits, most dry suits fit rather loosely. Sealed at the



Tropical research had been done, but Heine was on the cutting edge of high-latitude findings. This year when he heads south, he'll be working in a new area—the physiology of algae.

Heine, 41, is the scientific diving safety officer for Moss Landing Marine Laboratory, the shared marine science facility for California's state universities. Of the 150 people on site, about 70 are certified to dive. Heine maintains their records, train them, helps them dive on their projects, and teaches a research diving class every semester. In addition, he's served the American Academy of Underwater Sciences in a handful of different capacities, including as President-elect in 1994-95. This NAUI Instructor Trainer has garnered numerous diving awards, written the *NAUI Advanced Diving Technology and Techniques* manual, a book on dry suit diving, and the newly published *Cold Water Diving: A Guide to Ice Diving*. As a marine biologist, his publications list fills a couple of densely packed pages, from articles on Antarctic soft corals to the effects of sea otter foraging on kelp forest communities. And Heine seems to have seamlessly teamed adventure with his scientific life. In 1990, aboard a Soviet submersible, he plunged to



In water with 500-foot visibility, it's not hard to follow rule number one: Never lose sight of the hole.

John Heine

10,000 feet in the Monterey submarine canyon. For the last two summers, Heine toted surfboard and dive gear to Panama to teach a bilingual dive instructor training course, working in a few waves on the side. He's done gray whale research in the Arctic, traveled in New Zealand, and gone head to beak with 80-pound Emperor penguins at the edge of the ice.

When he comes home to Moss Landing where he lives with his wife of 15 years, he goes

back to teaching. He surfs and mountain bikes and plays the occasional game of volleyball. And perhaps he'll shave the beard. Here in the Golden State, after all, there's not a problem with the wind freezing ice crystals onto your face.

#### Dive Travel: Why Antarctica?

**Heine:** In a word: science. The whole continent is set aside for scientific work, so it's the only huge land mass that's not spoiled—it's fairly pristine.

*Continued on page 28*

neck and the wrists, dry suits provide a watertight barrier. However, since the only function of the suit is to keep you dry, some type of insulating undergarment must also be worn. By varying the undergarments, you can use the dry suit over a wide range of water temperatures.

There are several reasons why dry suits are more efficient than wetsuits for diving in cold water. Every time you dive, your wetsuit compresses. At a depth of 66 feet, a six-millimeter wetsuit has compressed to approximately two millimeters. That's not much insulation! Over time, the insulating cells of the neoprene break down. Most authorities estimate that the useful life of a wetsuit is between 200 and 300 dives, depending on the quality of neoprene. While a suit still looks all right, the insulating capabilities of the material may be gone.

As water flushes through a wetsuit

while you're diving, it carries away the heat your body used to warm it up. To further chill you, water evaporating from the suit's surface provides additional cooling.

Just as there are advantages and disadvantages to wetsuits, there are pros and cons to dry suits. Probably the most compelling reason to own a dry suit is to eliminate the misery factor in cold-water diving. In a dry suit you'll be warm in virtually any condition.

Dry suits can also increase your bottom time dramatically, since your body doesn't need to "burn" as much



Losing the misery factor—warm and comfortable in virtually any conditions.

Steve Bosky

oxygen to keep warm; you can take full advantage of the extended bottom times most dive computers provide for multi-level diving. In addition, you're less prone to decompression sickness when you're warm.

There are very few disadvantages to dry suits. Using a dry suit does require a bit more training than a wetsuit. It's not that dry suits are complex, but understanding how they work and how to care for one ensures you get the most out of owning one. Dry suit specialty courses are very short—typically about 12 hours.

*Continued on page 28*





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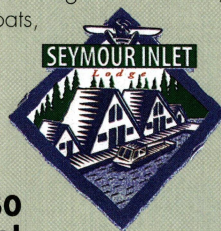
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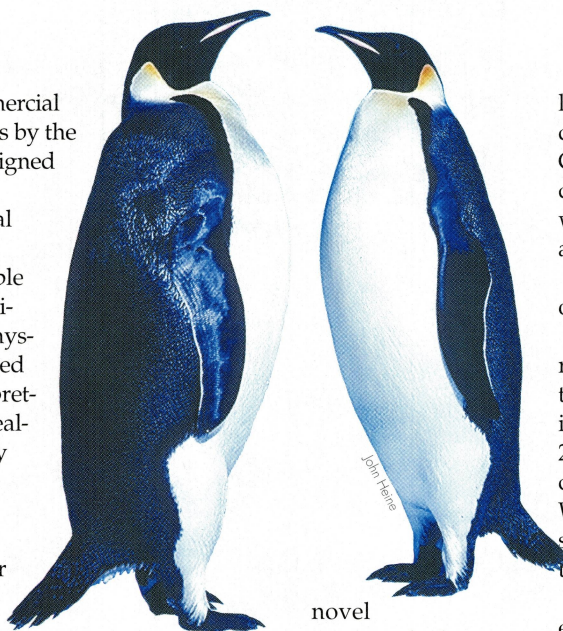


It's restricted from military, commercial mining, oil and fisheries industries by the treaty that all these nations have signed to be able to work there.

Our work is looking at chemical defense in marine organisms. It's been fairly well known for a couple of decades that a lot of marine animals have various chemical or physical defenses against getting preyed upon. It looked like there was a pretty strong trend from that being really high at the equator to relatively low at the poles. But nobody had ever done that work at the poles. That's what we set out to do.

**DT:** From reading some of your scientific papers, in fact, it looks like chemical defenses are there at the poles, too—at least in 11 out of the 18 species you studied....

**Heine:** Yes, it is fairly prevalent. From a science point of view that's interesting. But the bigger picture, the exciting thing, is that they're getting some drugs from the sea now, pharmaceutical applications. The chemists who were with us were interested in seeing if they could find something



novel or new, which would be fairly likely since Antarctica is so different from anywhere else on earth. The chemists were grabbing everything they could to see if they could find something that had antibacterial and antiviral properties. They sent specimens off to the National Institute of Health hoping to find a cure for cancer or something wild.

One of the other hot topics there right now is the hole in the ozone

layer. Antarctica was where it was first discovered. Now it's hitting parts of Chile and South America. It causes damage to animals, plants, skin. When we go down there, we wear sunscreen and sunglasses all the time.

**DT:** Certainly that's just the beginning of dealing with this harsh environment.

**Heine:** Yes. It's very remote, very rugged, very cold—it's common for it to be 50° below zero when we're diving. And the water is very cold, too, 28.7°F, that's -1.8°C. It's as cold as it can get without being frozen solid. Well, part of it is frozen solid, on the surface, and the rest is close, within a tenth of a degree.

**DT:** How do you cope with these extreme conditions—suitsing up, for example?

**Heine:** You layer up. To tell the truth, my body has never really been cold, because I put on about two inches thickness of underwear. It requires a ton of weight, but your body doesn't get cold as long as your suit's dry. It's your hands and around your lips that get cold.

Getting ready to dive is quite a process. We use dry suits, a 3/8" neoprene hood, with a latex hood over that, and the Viking dry glove

## The Edge

*Dry suit, continued from page 25*

Dry suits require more maintenance than wetsuits. You need to maintain the zipper and seals to avoid unnecessary repairs. After diving, the suit requires a good rinse, and the zippers and seals must be lubricated before each dive.

Probably the biggest complaint about dry suits, though, is that they are too expensive. In fact, the initial investment in a dry suit is much higher than what you spend for a wetsuit. However, most dry suits have a much longer effective life than a wetsuit.



What most divers fail to realize about using a dry suit is that, from an endurance standpoint, they can make more dives a day in a dry suit. If you do any amount of boat diving

in cold water, this brings your cost per dive way down.

Another popular dry suit misconception is that the neck seals are uncomfortable. It's true that a new dry suit with a poorly adjusted neck seal will be uncomfortable, but a well-adjusted seal is barely noticeable out of the water and unnoticeable in the water.

You may also hear people say that it's difficult to control your buoyancy in a dry suit.

Again, this is true, if

you haven't been trained. Properly trained dry suit divers actually achieve better buoyancy control than divers wearing wetsuits, weight belts and buoyancy compensators.

The last big myth about dry suit diving concerns the pounds of extra weight you'll need to control your buoyancy. In reality, your goal should be to wear the minimum weight and put the minimum volume of air into the suit. If you dive this way, achieving neutral buoyancy and hovering in any position is easy, even upside down.

If you're serious about getting the most bottom time out of cold water diving, the only effective way to do it is in a dry suit. If you've spent the money to travel to a spot where the water is cold, the dive won't be fun unless you're warm. That's what a dry suit is all about. ~

*Steve Barsky co-authored Dry Suit Diving, a most complete guide to selecting, using and maintaining a dry suit. Dry Suit Diving is available at dive shops, or directly from Watersport Books, (800) 776-3483.*



system. I wear a wool liner, then pull the five-fingered glove on over the sealing wrist ring. This was not enough to keep my hands warm, so I added a 1/4" neoprene three-fingered mitt over that. It's bulky, but warm. To keep the gloves from squeezing down on our hands, we put a small length of tubing under the wrist seal so warm air can flow from the suit into the

gloves and vice versa. For about the first ten minutes, your hands are very warm. After that they get cold, and sometimes a bit numb. If your hands are below your body, which they often are when you're working on the bottom, the air gets squeezed out of them, so you stop and raise your hands over your head, warm air goes from your suit into your gloves. Ahhhh.

**DT:** The hole in the ice, how do you drill it?

**Heine:** A bulldozer comes out and drills a four-foot hole with a big bit—it's pretty decadent at McMurdo [the U.S. station in Antarctica from which

Pinnacles and caverns in eerie shades of blue—nothing can reproduce the feeling of being there.

most research is done]. There are people there who do all that for you.

**DT:** How long will a hole stay open?

**Heine:** Depends on weather, maybe a couple of hours. During your dive you always have tenders chipping the hole away and keeping it clean with a net, so it doesn't freeze.

**DT:** How thick is the ice?

**Heine:** If it's annual ice that's broken up and refreezed, it's usually six to twelve feet thick. But there are places of many-years' ice where it might be hundreds, thousands of feet thick. We don't go through that.

**DT:** So you're suited up, you've got your hole in the ice, then what?

## PICKING A DRY SUIT

There are many different types of dry suits on the market, made from a variety of materials. These include crushed neoprene dry suits, foam neoprene dry suits, tri-laminate suits, urethane-coated fabrics, and vulcanized rubber dry suits. Each type of suit has its own particular characteristics. In general, tri-laminate suits are lighter weight, and often preferred by underwater photographers. Crushed neoprene and vulcanized rubber are heavier; wreck and professional divers often prefer these models. Foam neoprene and urethane coated suits are the least expensive, but don't offer the performance found in tri-laminate, crushed neoprene, or vulcanized rubber suits.

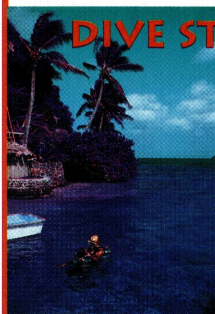
Any and all of these manufacturers should be glad to provide you with more detailed information on their line of dry suits:

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Ocean Ray Wetsuits, (800) 645-5554  
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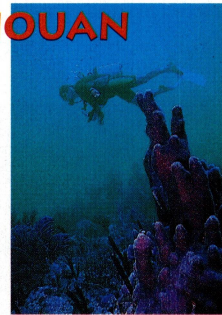
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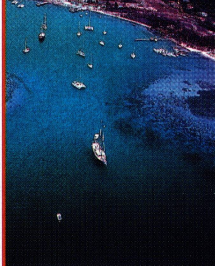
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# The Edge

**Heine:** We lower a down line with a pony bottle and regulator at the bottom. We sometimes use a strobe flasher to help us keep an eye on the line in darker waters, although it's usually easy to see the hole because so much light comes through it. The cardinal rule is, "You never lose sight of the hole."

**DT:** Wait a second, you're not tethered?

**Heine:** It's not necessary. The visibility is 500 to 800 feet.

**DT:** That's better than the air in LA.

**Heine:** It's pretty amazing. About six weeks out of the year when there's a really intense plankton bloom, the visibility goes down to almost zero. People still dive then, but they use a down line and they're tethered to it so they always have a solid connection to the surface. But the other 46 weeks of the year, it's fine.

Most of the diving is relatively deep because down to about 50 or 60 feet, the bottom is scoured by icebergs. From there down is where it gets really lush. Most of our diving is in the 100- to 130-foot range.

**DT:** I'm just amazed by the idea of 500-foot-plus visibility, now you say it's

lush. Wow.

**Heine:** Most people think it's fairly barren, but it's actually really lush. There are 21 species of sponges, and they get huge. The benthic ecology—the critters on the bottom—are also really lush. And really extensive.

The other thing that's unusual is that they get very large. There's a phenome-

**"It's common for it to be 50° below zero when we're diving. It's as cold as it can get without being frozen solid."**

non down there called 'gigantism,' where species similar to what you would see in temperate or tropical waters are much larger. For example, nudibranchs get to be about six, seven inches long.

**DT:** What other anomalies of nature


have been found?

**Heine:** Things tend to grow really slowly because it's very cold. And they live very long. It's hard to estimate even. When people have measured different organisms and tried to look for growth rates over ten and twenty years, they have seen almost none. When we see sponges that are a meter or two tall, and three feet in diameter—there are some estimates that they might be 500 years old. That's old for a sponge; no one had any idea they lived that long.

**DT:** And larger animals? You mentioned that you see Weddell seals.

**Heine:** Yes. They're great. They can spend about an hour underwater on one breath, and you can hear and see them when you're diving. They make clicks and high whine noises and come up and swim around occasionally. What they do is look for the cracks in the ice and they'll find one big enough to use as a breathing hole. They also have specially adapted teeth to scrape underneath the ice to keep a breathing hole open.

**DT:** Do they use the holes you drill as



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their breathing holes?

**Heine:** Oh, yes. In fact, we'll drill a hole and then usually within an hour or two a seal will pop up. The only potential problem is that the hole is just big enough for one or two divers and occasionally we'll be at the end of our dive coming up and a seal will be in the hole. There's not enough room for all of us, so we'll wait a couple of minutes for the seal to move, and if not we give it a gentle shove. But they're very friendly—they've never been hunted by humans. They only live in Antarctica.

**DT:** Do you see other mammals?

**Heine:** Not when the ice is a thick sheet. At that time the ice edge—where the edge of the ice met open ocean—was about 30 or 40 miles away. None of the mammals venture that far under, they're not adapted to opening breathing holes like the Weddell seals. But when we dive on the ice edge, there's a lot of action, orcas and leopard seals—leopard seals are pretty nasty. They're similar to a white shark around here. They're 11 feet long—for a seal that's big—and they have a big mouth and

sharp teeth. They eat penguins. The penguins stand on the ice edge, so the leopard seals cruise just under the edge and wait for the penguins to jump back in. When you're diving and sitting on the edge—people have had a leopard seal pop up right between their legs and they had to fly backwards to get away.


Palmer Station, where I'm going next week, on the other side of the continent from where I've been before, is all open water diving out of Zodiacs. Although the seals are fairly rare, there have been reports from other scientists there that the seals came up to the divers underwater with their mouths open, and these guys had to hide in a little cave for a few minutes and wait for the seal to go away.

**DT:** [checking the tape machine] Sorry to bother with this, sometimes I just want to make sure everything's working right. I check the batteries and bring extras, just in case....

**Heine:** That's just the same way I am before these trips. I get all my camera gear together and check it, then three days later I do it all again, just to make sure I really have everything, and it

works. There's no hardware store down there. You forget your batteries, you're really screwed.

**DT:** Beyond pure logistics, what does the poet in you think of being under the ice—if there is a poet in there....

**Heine:** There are surreal vistas that are unexplainable, unbelievable... sometimes when we're diving shallow and we're going through caves and caverns of ice, the blue colors, the stalactites and stalagmites in the ice, the pinnacles, are just unbelievable. You can't take pictures that do them justice because the colors aren't there. And I've never seen anybody draw or reproduce them to capture the feeling of what it's really like to be there. 

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- John Heine's book, *Cold Water Diving: A Guide to Ice Diving*, is available for \$17.95 (plus \$3.50 for postage and handling) from Best Publishing: (800) 468-1055, fax (520) 527-1055.

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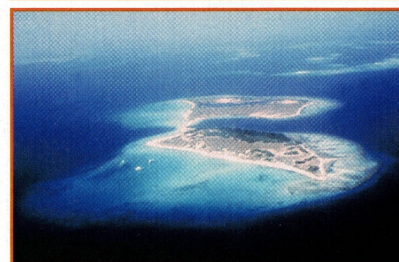
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#### *X-man: Curtis Boggs*



Curtis Boggs

I slip off the back of the boat into the clearest, calmest water I've ever seen. On a boat with 20 divers going down the mooring line, I figure on a side excursion with my dive buddy. Doing our own tour of the wall, we may encounter things the larger group will not.

With my face penetrating the surface, I'm greeted by an aerial view of the reef and wall below. As we drop along the wall, we are accompanied by the largest and friendliest grouper I've ever been introduced to, but after it discovers we have no food, it moves on. (Come to think of it, this reminds me of my last date, who discovered underwater photographers don't make any money—gone in a flash.)

I notice plenty of things on the wall I never encountered before, even though I have been poring over this site with my eyes...oh probably 200-300 times. Beautiful elephant ear sponges intertwine with red rope sponges and enormous gorgonians doing the hula in the light current. As I frame this killer shot, the boat, nearly 100 feet up, drifts to the left, putting itself right in front of the sun. The writing on the side is clearly legible, I get the perfect shot. Thank you, God.

It's dives like these that make me wish they put more than 36 shots on a roll of film. And thankful for a place like the Caymans. Without a doubt, it's got the makings of the perfect back-drop, a photographer's dream. Basically it's consistency—in the visibility, the weather, the quality of dive operations and sites—that make this one of my favorite places. It's why I'll keep returning here, lens in hand, time after time.

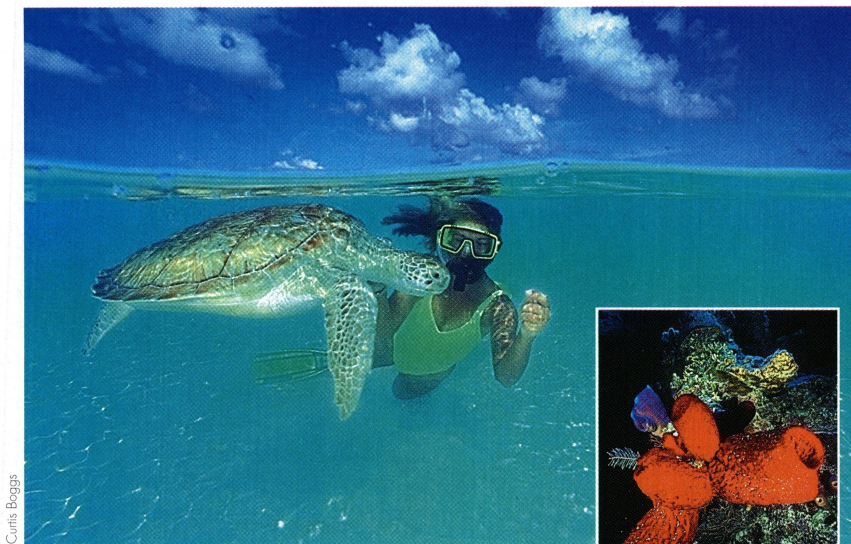
With this said, it's no wonder the Cayman Islands consistently attract the most divers per square foot. It also means they boast some of the best mapped, most accessible diving around. Another trip to Cayman means a chance to discover fresh spots. Some basic tricks for this: one, jump off the back of the boat for a little exploring without the rest of the group (particularly important for a strobemaster like me); two, check out what the shore has to offer; three, find a dive operator with a small fast boat to take you to places even they haven't checked out before. Don't be afraid to dive Cayman your way, to ask for that extra mile.

Let's begin with the shore dives. There are several you can do that most of the dive magazines and divemasters

#### **Dive Briefing**

WATER TEMPERATURE AROUND CAYMAN averages 80°F, air temperature about 77°—a little higher in summer, a little lower in winter. Diving conditions are generally very mild, although strong winds will occasionally kick up a pretty good chop. Even then, diveable waters can normally still be found on the leeward side of the island. The only thing that may occasionally threaten your diving plans is one of the hurricanes that blow through from time to time in late summer and fall. Visibility is among the best in the Caribbean, consistently between 100' and 150'. There are steep drop-offs on all sides of the island making it primarily wall-diving territory. The west, or lee side, is home to most of the dive shops and has the calmest waters. The south wall is a bit more challenging, but has many fine, and newly opened sites. The north wall likewise has some good sites—a truly good bet to spot passing pelagics. Least explored is the east end wall—this is true adventure diving that still remains on a place as popular as Grand Cayman!





Curtis Boggs

**Top:** Cayman boasts exceptionally fine snorkeling, including a chance to swim with sea turtles; **Inset:** Cayman's healthy growth of sponges come in a whole spectrum of vibrant colors, including smoldering red.



### ■ ■ ■ Dive Sites

- 1-Stingray City
- 2-Trinity Caves
- 3-Orange Canyon
- 4-Big Tunnels
- 5-The Balboa
- 6-Aquarium
- 7-The Oro Verde
- 8-Tarpon Alley
- 9-Grand Canyon
- 10-Japanese Garden
- 11-Smith's Cove
- 12-Eden Rocks
- 13-Ghost Mountain
- 14-Lemon Drop
- 15-Cinderella's Castle
- 16-Three Sisters
- 17-Lighthouse Wall
- 18-Julie's Wall
- 19-Grouper Grotto

don't usually talk about.

If you don't mind a bit of a swim (at places up to 100 + yards), the north side of the island offers some of the greatest dives. Not for the weak at heart—recommended for the hard core—explorers of these spots will be rewarded by the breathtaking. Old Man Bay is a dive I made with a few friends. We just headed out from the church parking lot to one of the sheerest, most densely populated walls I've ever seen. After playing hide and seek with a six-foot eagle ray and photographing the largest barrel sponge I've ever seen, we had to surface due to a shortage of air. Ask your local divemaster about these out of the way places. Divemasters who've lived on Cayman for any length of time have their own special places. But don't be surprised if you get replies like "Oh,... just shore dive anywhere, it's all good." That's not just a quick answer by a tired divemaster, it's closer to the truth than you would think.

### 1. TRY A GUIDED DIVE FIRST

After getting an extensive, guided dive, try doing the same site twice. Yes, a repeat performance. First dive to learn your way around, then go back to the same site to do your own thing, maybe at a different time of day. A lot may have to do with the way a photographer works, too, but I promise you will not see the same stuff. Now that you have the topography under your belt, concentrate on the nooks and crannies.

### 2. EXPLORE ON YOUR OWN

Grab your buddy and explore at your own pace, taking the time to find things you wouldn't see with a group: small fish and even big guys like eagle rays don't like the sound of bubbles, especially from a group of six or eight divers. I've often had eagle rays sent my way by the group diving farther along the wall. Chance opportunities for meeting the big fish, eagle rays and mantas are enhanced by keeping a very low profile. Move around the reef slowly instead

of swimming along like my bumbling dog Coty chasing the neighbor's cat; you won't scare everything away and you'll have a better chance to photograph/see it.

### 3. OUT OF THE WAY DIVES

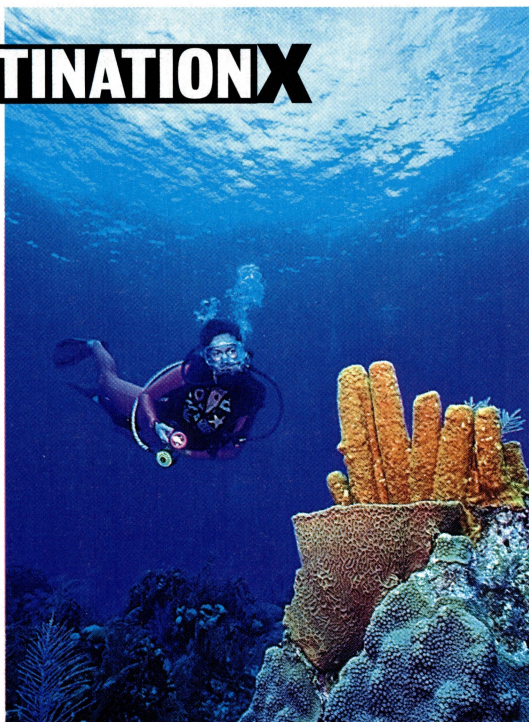
Rent a jeep. Load up a few tanks, your dive gear, lunch and a map of the island and go exploring. Every divemaster or instructor who has lived on the island for a while has a special little place to shore dive. Buy them beer after work and weasel it out of them. The dive staff on Cayman is extremely helpful, and will often let you in on some of their insider tips. You might even get someone to go exploring with you on his or her day off.

Okay, okay, so you want me to reveal a few of my own secret shore spots. There are plenty of great shore



# DESTINATION X

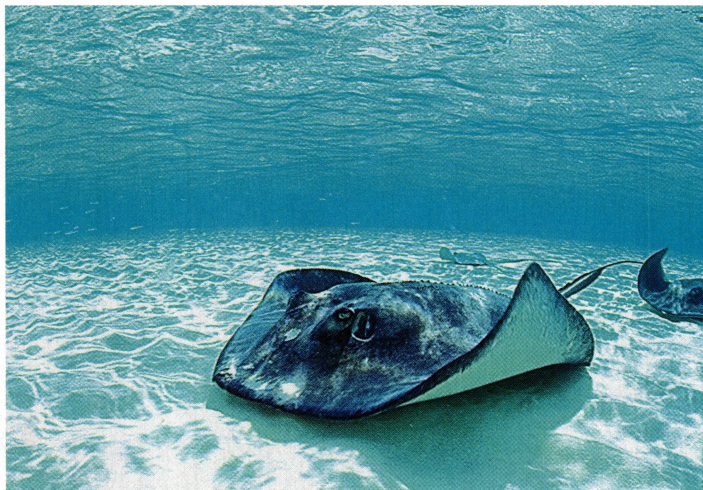
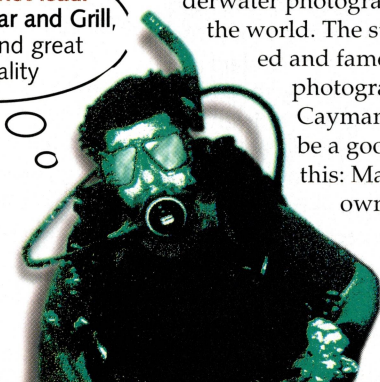
Curtis Boggs



**Above: Orange tube sponges thrive on the healthy Cayman reef; Above right: Undoubtedly the most photographed dive site in the Caribbean, if not the world—Stingray City.**

dives on the north side of the island, but they are all hard to get to. Long swims, tricky navigation through shallow reefs, and currents are the norm here. So what's the payoff? Some of the best untouched diving around. Babylon is my favorite, about a 150-yard swim from shore, but once you get there, you'll be greeted by a wall that starts in 50 feet of water. This is the sheerest wall I've ever seen, with deep cuts and coral outcroppings. Lush would be an understatement for the coral and sponge growth. Right next to Babylon is Julie's Wall, also worth a visit. And if all this swimming just feels like too much for you, Sunset House Divers offers an all-day trip to these spots aboard their boat, *The Manta*. Turtle Farm Wall is a dive everyone knows, and no one should miss (it's hard to, in fact, it's right next to the Turtle Farm). This one is fairly easy, just a very short swim out to a miniwall that starts in 10-15 feet of water and drops to about 60 feet with a sand bot-

**X-man's hot lead:**  
Lone Star Bar and Grill,  
Tex-Mex and great  
hospitality



Curtis Boggs

tom. This is a nice wall that's shallow and allows plenty of time to explore or take photos.

## 4. SMALLER BOATS

How about diving from a small boat? Just you, your dive buddy, a FEW other divers, and your own private dive

guide. Sound nice? Well, on Cayman you can get that too. There are a few operators who specialize in small groups and custom diving. The six-pack boats carry a maximum of, you guessed it, six divers. You can also charter these smaller boats for about \$400 for half a day! Divide that by six of your closest friends, \$66.66 for a morning of doing-what-you-want diving. For photographers, Fisheye of Cayman specializes in diving for photographers and has small boats to charter, as well as every piece of photo gear you could possibly imagine. A tip for shuttergeeks after the macro subjects, Keith at Neptune's Realm Divers can find anything. He has great eyes and a knack for little stuff.

## 5. TAKE MY PICTURE, PLEASE

Cayman could also be named the underwater photography capitol of the world. The stream of talented and famous underwater photographers who call Cayman home should be a good indication of this: Martin Sutton, the owner of Fisheye, is a regular contib-

utor to many publications worldwide; Cathy Church has set the standard for photo classes with her week-long courses; Mike Lawrence and Ron Everdij of the Ocean Image Collection show and sell their work as some of the best fine art prints in

Cayman; Louis Hatcher at Parrot's Landing is a great teacher for the basics in underwater shooting, as do Moke and Reid at Don Foster's Ocean Photo Centre. The full spectrum is in place, from learning to take photos underwater to honing advanced abilities.

**The full spectrum is in place for learning to take photos underwater to honing advanced abilities**

Everything is available for the photographer from high-quality slide and print film processing to rentals and great repair work.

## 6. DINE 'TIL YOU DRIP

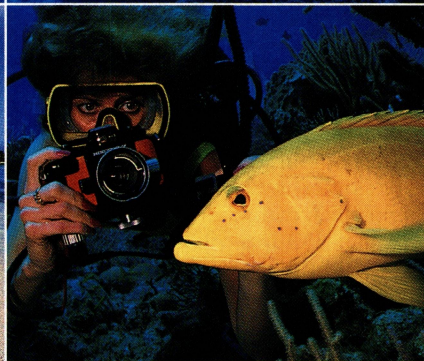
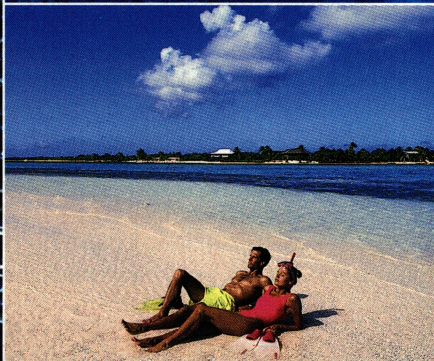
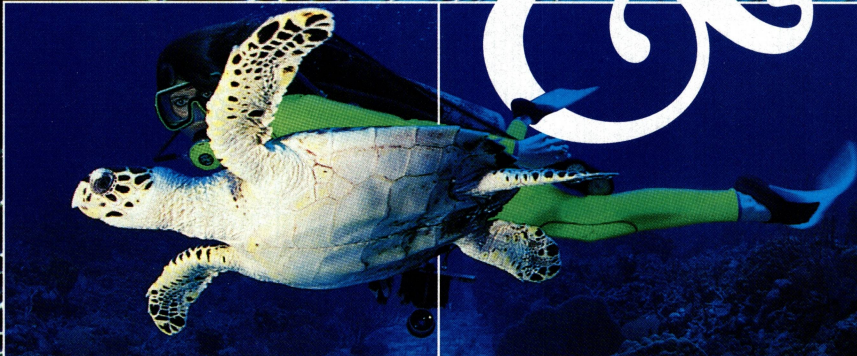
Enough zipping around the island...I'm hungry. You know this feeling—it's the one thing that unites all divers. Check out the tasty Tex Mex at the Lone Star Bar and Grill. This is the place to eat if you like Mexican or Tex-Mex food. Mike (the owner) is one of the island's wonderful people. He offers free Thanksgiving dinners and other support to the local divemasters and instructors, as well as many charities. He likes where he lives and likes to see visitors have a good time.

## 7. JUST ONE DRINK

We all know diving and drinking don't mix, but imagine sitting on a wooden deck overlooking the Caribbean, while the trade winds rif-



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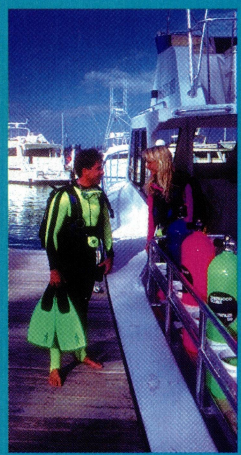
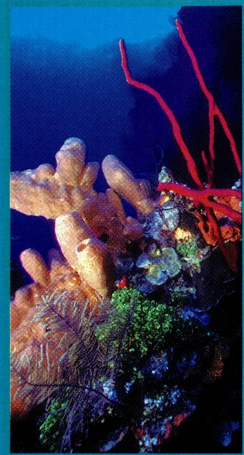
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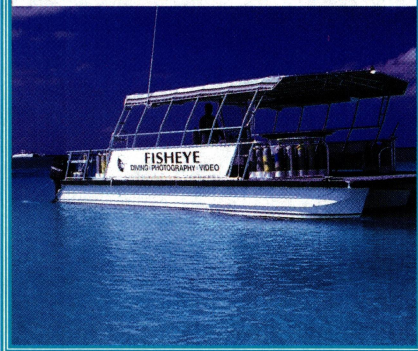
"Those who dive us,  
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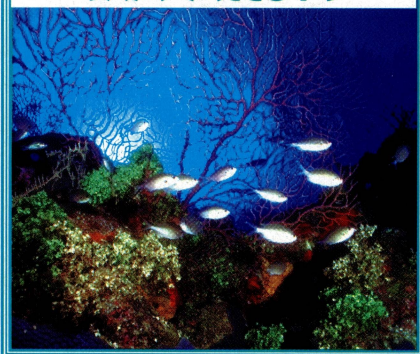
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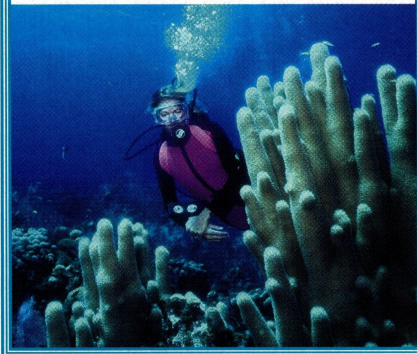
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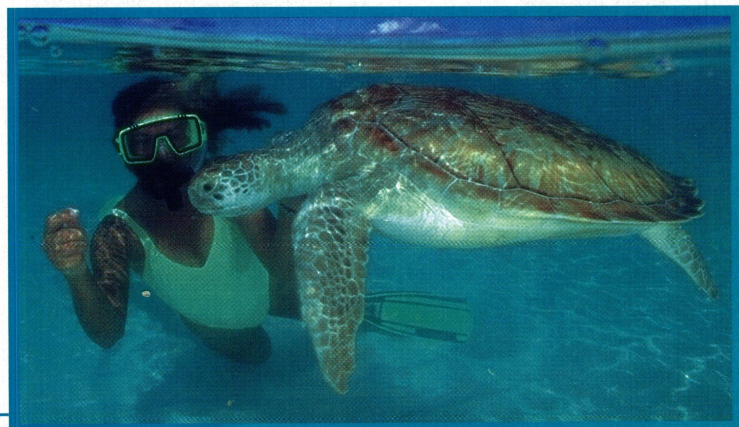
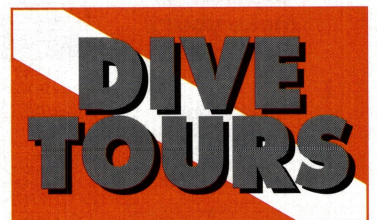


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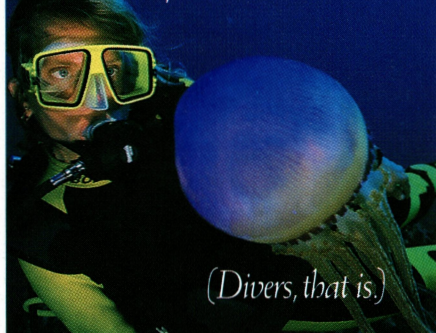
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Photo ©1996 Gui Garcia

file your hair and you sip a cold Red Stripe. You watch the lights from the night divers off shore, and chat with the new friends you met while diving. Sounds like heaven? No, it's My Bar at Sunset House. No, I don't own the bar, that's its name, My Bar. Happy hours on Friday evenings are a good reason for living. Have fun and meet people from everywhere: South Africa, England, Canada, Jamaica, and yes, even Cayman.

## NOW ONTO THE DIVE ZONES...

What are my favorite dive spots? Well, wouldn't you like to know. After *Dive Travel* wedged me into a hard wooden chair with shiny iron studs, plugged in the electrodes, and then started talking about applying a new pair of tweezers to my toenails, ONE BY ONE, I finally caved in. I'm a tough guy, but not that tough. So here's my definitive list, albeit it as provided under a certain amount of ...uh, shall we say, duress.

•**Turtle Farm Wall**—Dive, then visit the turtles! A great little shore dive is located right next to the Turtle Farm in West Bay. A short swim out (10 - 15 fin kicks), and you will arrive at the top of a mini wall in around 15 feet that drops off to a sand bottom at 40 feet. Keep going—it gets better as you go farther along the wall, away from the Turtle Farm.

•**Eden Rock/Devil's Grotto**—Way cool, to put things in perspective for our teenage readers! Caves, swim-throughs and grottos all diveable from shore and fairly shallow (40 feet or less). I love the way the sunlight sparkles through the cracks in the top of the swim-throughs, creating iridescent beams of dancing light. If there were cathedrals in the cityscape of Atlantis, they would surely look like this. In lieu of the irony of the names, its even more perfect. Without a doubt, Eden Rock and Devil's Grotto is my source for the mystical on Cayman.

•**Gail's Mountain**—Right outside the North Sound from Sand Bar is some of the best north side wall diving.

Typical of Cayman are the steep walls overgrown with colorful corals and sponges, and Gail's Mountain is not exception. I have often spent a day of diving here playing hide and seek with eagle rays while trying to photograph them. There's not telling what you'll see while diving the North Wall. Besides the shy eagle rays, I have been able to hover and spy on reef and hammerhead sharks in this gem.

•**Orange Canyon**—This is one of the so-called "standard" west side dives. A word about the "standard dives"—DO NOT leave them off your list, as most of these dives are definitely world class. Orange Canyon has some of the largest orange elephant ear sponges I have seen, and lots of em! That's not all though. This site is

**This site is covered with a frenzied burst of colorful sponges and corals. Reminds me of the by-product of the box of crayons my dog hid by the heater.**

covered with a frenzied burst of colorful sponges and corals. Reminds me of the by-product of the box of crayons my dog hid by the heater.

•**Trinity Caves**—Another west side wall dive worth visiting. If I had to pick one (and I just might have to if they keep waving the thumb-

screws at me) this is probably my favorite dive, and definitely my most frequently photographed. Wonderful outcroppings, cuts and swim-throughs on another densely populated wall of coral and sponges. On my last dive here we encountered a six-foot green moray eel, elegantly free-swimming around the wall.

•**Victoria House Beach**—Where can you go in Cayman to see turtles? No, not only the Turtle Farm (your obvious choice if you've been paying attention). Here's a hot tip: try the beach at Victoria House Condos. There are two or three resident turtles that escaped from the Turtle Farm and are hiding out here. You can snorkel and swim with them, just don't grab or ride them. Keep in mind that Victoria House is a collection of private condos, so please be courteous and keep the beach clean.

•**Sand Bar**—Everyone has read about Stingray City by now, but did



you know there are two places in Cayman with semi-tame rays? Well, there are and Sand Bar may just serve your family vacation better than Stingray City. Sand Bar is, just as the name implies, a sand bar. Shallow (about waist deep) with a white sand bottom, the clearest of water, and 50 hungry stingrays. You can snorkel, swim, walk and dive with the rays here and not have to worry about your bottom time. There is a nice little reef between the Sandbar and fringing reef that makes a nice dive with rays.

## Cayman Basics

**Destination:** Grand Cayman

**Airports:** There is one airport on the island at Georgetown.

**Entry Regulations:** It is required that all Canadian and U.S. citizens show proof of citizenship and present an onward or return ticket.

**Currency:** The Cayman dollar is fixed at US \$1.25 = CI \$1, but the U.S. dollar is also widely accepted.

**Airport Fees:** There is a departure tax of U.S. \$7.

**Electricity:** 110 volts, 60 cycles

**Language:** English

**Credit Cards Accepted:** All in most areas.

**Climate:** Average summer temperature are 80s and 90s, winter temps are in the 70s and 80s. Late summer and fall bring hurricanes, although diving is still possible year-round. When the weather becomes nasty, the dive boat operators just relocate to the leeward side of the island for optimum dive conditions.

**Cuisine:** The vast variety of restaurants allows a new and different feast for every meal. Dine upscale along West Bay at the Wharf, The Seaharvest and Ristorante Pappagallo.

**Special Interest:** Try fishing, windsurfing, tennis, golf or parasailing to name only a few, or check out a live performance at the Cayman National Theater for some comedy, drama or music.

**Live-aboards:** Cayman Aggressor III/Aggressor Fleet offer unlimited diving at Grand Cayman for seven-day trips, (800) 348-2628

**Dive Shops:** Don Foster's Dive (800) 83-DIVER; Fisheye (809) 947-4209; Jackie's Watersports (800) 450-2084; Sunset Divers (800) 854-4767; Quabbin Dives (800) 238-6712; Capitol's Surfside Watersports (809) 949-7330; Little Cayman Paradise (800) 450-2084.

**Super Snorkeling Spots:** Seven Mile Beach, West Bay Cemetery, Eden Rock, Smith Cove, Parrot's Landing and Coconut Harbour, to name a few.

**Accommodations:** Sleep Inn (800) 322-0321; Southern Cross Club (800) 899-CLUB. Many of the dive shops listed above offer accommodation packages as well.

**Wholesalers:** Dive Tours (800) 433-0885.

**Before You Go, Read:** *Best Dives of the Caribbean*, by Joyce and Jon Huber.

**Cool Cayman Beach Reading:** *The Firm*, by John Grisham for corporate intrigue and corruption in the Caymans.

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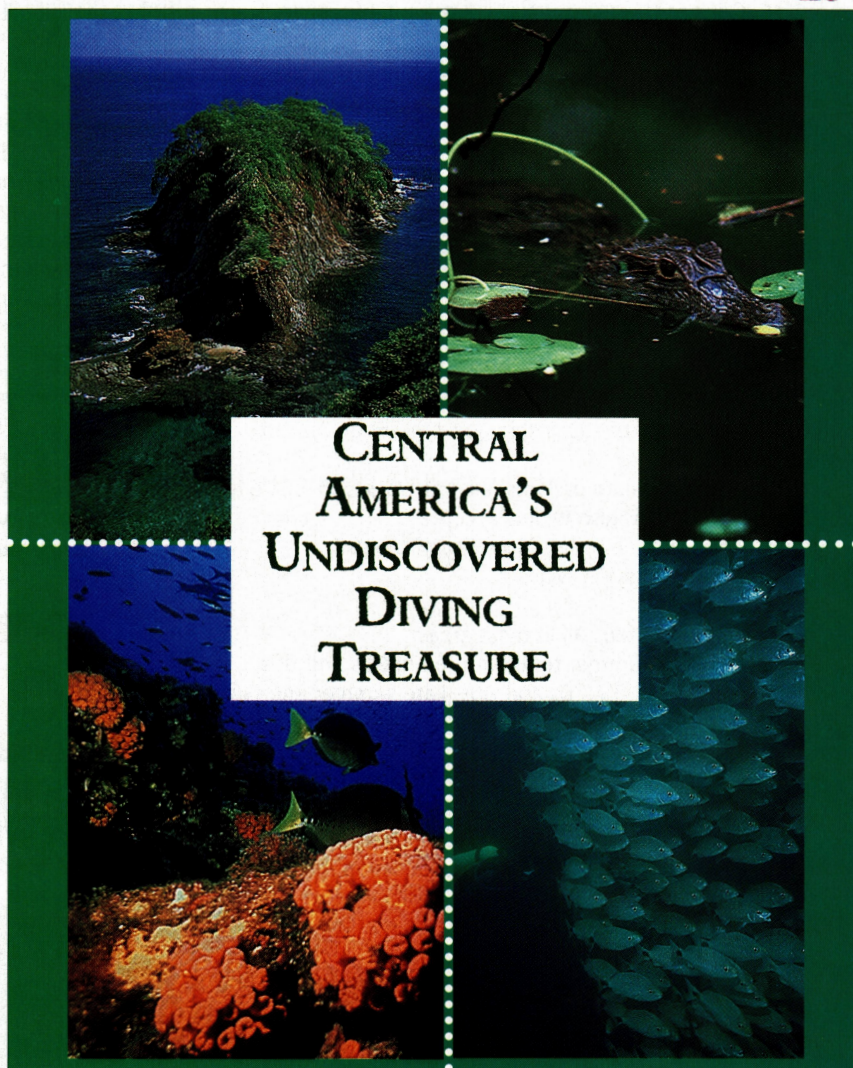


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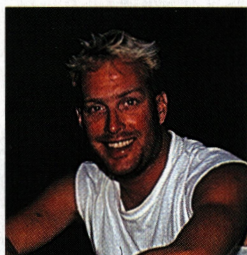
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# Ocean Eye



## David Fleetham

David Fleetham has been diving and photographing underwater for over 20 years. He is represented by 18 different stock agencies throughout the world and his work has won numerous awards. His photo of a sandbar shark appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine in 1991 and he has been published by *National Geographic*, the Cousteau Society and numerous North American diving publications. The London Zoo, Hong Kong Museum, Waikiki, Vancouver and Monterey Bay Aquariums, and Aquarium of the Americas all display his work.

**Above: A tiny octopus drifting in the currents on a night dive in Australia; Below: A cuttlefish entertains visitors at home in the waters of Indonesia.**

### My photographic system:

I use Canon cameras exclusively. On my first dive I'll start with an F-1N with a 15mm fisheye in an Aquatica housing, and an EOS 10s with a 100mm macro autofocus in an Ikelite housing. These lenses are at opposite ends in terms of scale, and are the two I most frequently shoot underwater. With the exception of available light images, I use two Ikelite 150 Substrobes. Although TTL metering is available with these units, I generally use them on manual. The 35-20mm zoom lens has also proven useful in special situations, such as shooting cautious and unpredictable creatures like sharks and dolphins.



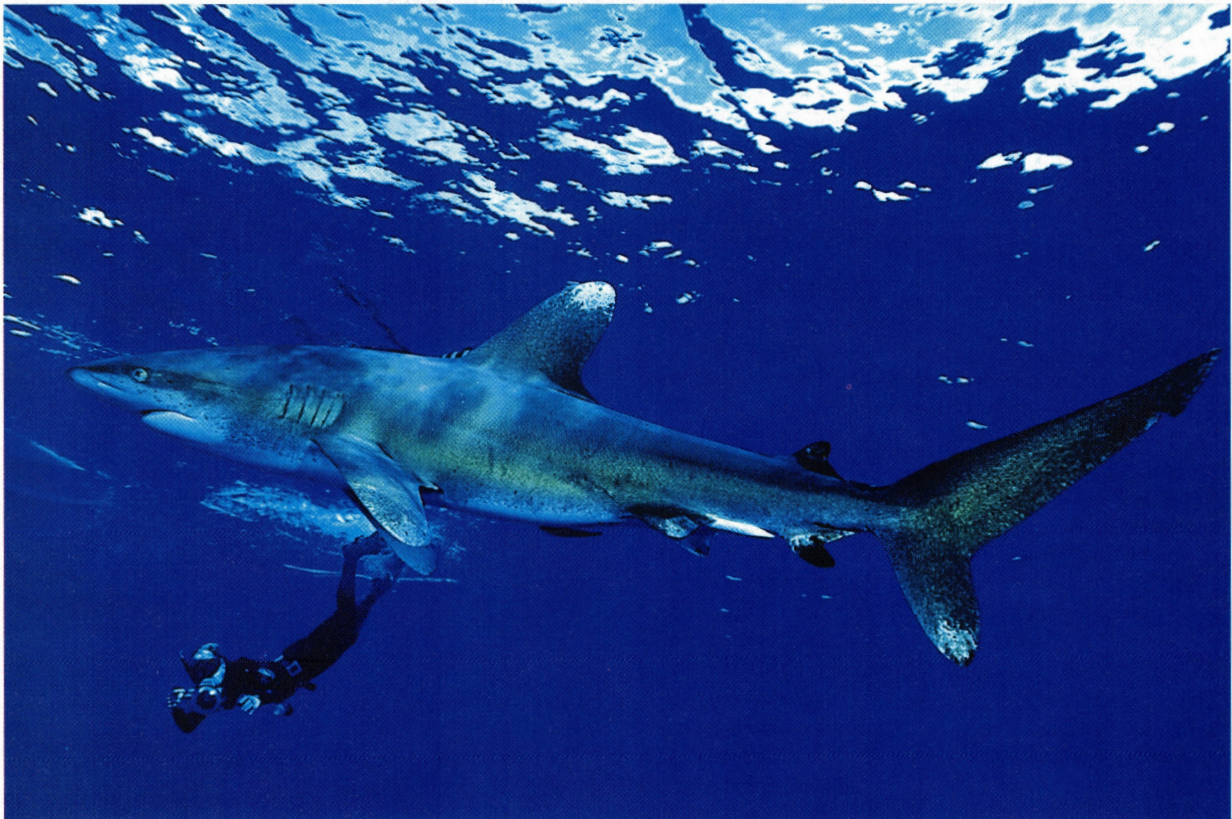


# Ocean Eye

## David Fleetham

The best advice I can think of to improve your images is to shoot as much as you can, whenever you can, and really study your results. Go back and experiment with your setup until you start getting the kind of results you're looking for. Other people's work can teach you a lot about photography, and about marine life as well. There are a number of wonderful coffee table books containing the best work of some of the world's finest underwater photographers; add them to your library and refer to them whenever your images start to look monotonous. Once you've mastered the basics, intimate knowledge of the reef's inhabitants often produces better results than trying to improve your method or hardware. Study the creatures where you will be shooting, and when you get there spend as much time as you can talking to the dive guides who are underwater every day.

**Left: A well-disguised Commerson's frogfish, in Hawaii; Below: An oceanic whitetip, also in the waters off Hawaii; Opposite: A nautilus navigating among the soft corals in Indonesia.**









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DIVE TRAVEL is pleased to welcome our new photo columnist, Susan Blanchet. Her artistic imagery hangs in private collections, corporate offices, and has appeared in a variety of publications throughout the United States and abroad. A partial list of her publishing credits includes: Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, the Discovery Channel, Houghton-Mifflin, Ikelite Underwater Systems and numerous scuba diving magazines. In her column, Perspectives, Susan will be introducing elements of design and composition, as well as addressing some of the technical problems that may be preventing you from coming back from your scuba adventures with better images. We hope you enjoy her column and benefit from her advice.

## Ocean Eye

Text and Photos by  
Susan E. Blanchet



# PERSPECTIVES

An artfully arranged living room, a Renaissance painting and a photograph of an angelfish—what do they have in common? In fact, a handful of design elements guide the organization and composition of every artful presentation. Consciously applying these principles to your practice of photography will improve your images dramatically.

The premise of this column is to simplify the technical nature surrounding the elements of design and create a series of visual experiences to enhance your underwater photographs. Start with the K.I.S.S. (keep it simple scenario)—a method of thinking, creating and visualizing. Whether you are shooting with a disposable underwater camera, or using three strobes with a housed camera, the concepts remain the same. The end result is more integration with the ocean environment and dynamic underwater composition.

Let's begin with the eight principles and elements of design: 1) Figure /Ground; 2) Perspective; 3) Volume; 4) Texture; 5) Line; 6) Shape; 7) Balance; and 8) Rhythm.

In addition, there are several methods of composition within each element that apply when it comes to photographing the reef. One of the easiest

ways to learn, retain and put this information to use is to cover one element at a time and include one or two accompanying concepts.

### FIGURE /GROUND

The basic concept of Figure/Ground is the foundation element for all design tasks. In every photograph, there are two items: The subject is figure, and the rest of the photo is simply ground. To avoid creating those classic buffet shots containing everything but the kitchen sink, first try narrowing your focus down to a single subject, or figure.

Perhaps, a specific fish, a sponge or diver would make a great subject. Sponges—and some divers—will remain stationary long enough for you to settle yourself and release the shutter. It takes practice, but becomes natural after a while. Ground is the background.

A simple technique you can use to create distinction between your subject and background is sharpness contrast. In other words, one subject is clear, and the other is not. One method of achieving this contrast is by blurred motion.

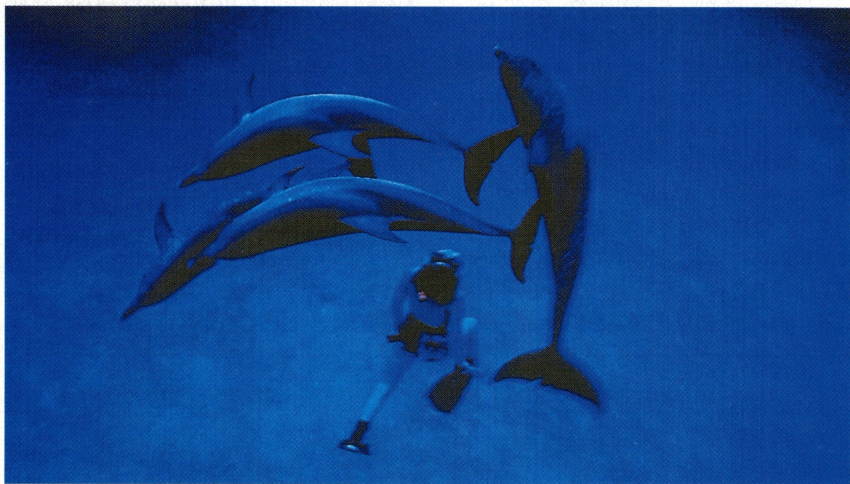
## PHOTOCCLASS



**Top:** This pair of French angelfish was perusing the reef. I panned until the composition felt right and tripped the shutter.

**Bottom:** Panning the manta on this night dive was a necessity. By doing so, the manta and videographers create a dramatic diagonal line across the image. It also reveals the manta's relative size compared to these divers. In this case, a picture says a thousand words and conveys the excitement and action experienced by those on the dive.





**Top:** The queen angelfish was heading right for the camera, which caused blurred motion, thereby creating a contrast or distinction between it and the background of this image.

**Bottom:** This same contrast is demonstrated when spotted dolphin circle this snorkeler, creating this blurred visual distinction.

Another way to format an image with sharpness contrast is by panning the camera, following your moving subject through the viewfinder and depressing the trigger when ready. This technique, called panned motion, allows for more composition time—that is, a chance to take the extra seconds necessary to think through to the finished image. When blurred motion occurs, action is frequently taking place in front of the camera, but with panned motion the action often takes place on a horizontal plane.



### Panning Power Made Easy

Hold the camera steady when shooting blurring subjects. It prevents an unnatural blur in the finished emulsion, allowing the true contrast to create a more dramatic image. The same holds true for shooting a dynamic panned shot; lock your arms or elbows in a comfortable stance that gives you the mobility for panning. It sounds simple and it is—the key to making it part of your skill inventory is to practice it so often that you don't even think about it any more, it just naturally becomes a part of your repertoire.

## Angels in the Underworld

SOMETIMES, SHOOTING THAT SIGNATURE image can be a matter of divine luck, as was the case with this charging queen angelfish.

The first indication this was going to be a different sort of day came just five minutes into the dive. At 45 feet, my dive buddy, Rust, was enveloped in bubbles. I checked everything from purge valve to zippers and flippers. I watched as Rust pointed at my waist where a queen angelfish swam under my arm like a cat chasing its tail. I had been hoping for a close-up shot of this species for years, and now had one flying around my front porch, so to speak.

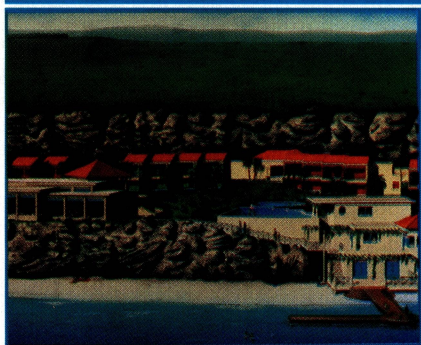
I contemplated placing my entire rig with two strobe systems under my arm and shooting from the hip. But the fish had moved off and was now charging me. I brought the rig to my face for protection. The fish charged the camera, retreated five or six feet and repeated this behavior, over and over.

I began a rapid-fire procedure. I was sure the queen angelfish would soon be on its way. Gradually it dawned on me that the fish had a somewhat different frame of reference: I was seen as one large territory-infringing *Holacanthus ciliaris*—a rival queen angelfish—with the camera's dome port reflecting an exact replica of its own ferocity. By the time I attempted any variance in composition or lighting, the fish had looped. On one occasion, it actually stopped long enough to attempt taking out the dome port with its teeth.

By my calculations, it completed at least 20 forays before I ran out of film and a fair portion of air. Exiting gracefully didn't appear to be an option. Nodding a thank you and farewell, I raised the white flag and swam backwards out of its terrain, my strobes down and dome port tilted toward the ocean floor in a gesture of acquiescence. I saluted its courage in the face of a much larger, though illusory, competitor.

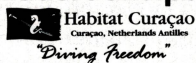


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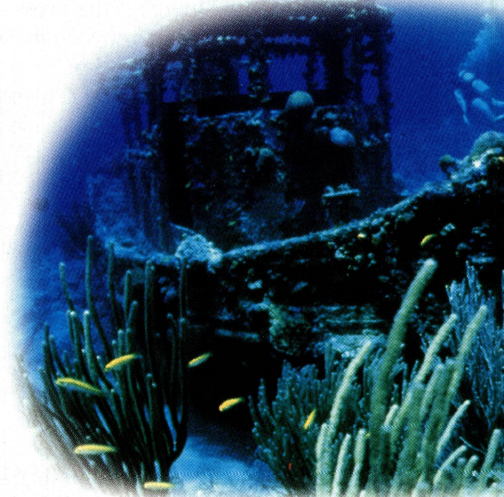
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O M T S H E E V E R Y D A Y









# East of AFRICA

THIS IS THE THING: Africa is an idea. Larger than life, looming against the sky, an idea that expands the horizon. Dusty and wild and in the sunset, the roar of lions fills the hollows of the tawny hills. Or perhaps it's the coast, an island, and in the marketplace magenta and mustard frames the faces of women with jeweled secretive eyes. Piles of brown roots and heaps of grain and baskets of green leafy vegetables you have no idea the names of line the stalls of vendors. At the waterfront, against an azure sky marbled by clouds, you watch the prow of a dhow knife through the ocean mid-distant, and the curve of its sails is sweeter and softer than anything you have ever seen.

THIS IS THE THING: Africa is not an idea. It is 58 countries and territories on the second largest continent in the world. The smallest of its independent nations, the Seychelles, has less than 180 square miles of land, the largest, Sudan, has nearly a million. Political turmoil and shuffling are rife; 46 African nations only gained their independence from colonial powers in the last 30 years. In South Africa, the majority of the population only recently gained full enfranchisement—freedom. The longest river on the planet, the Nile, slices down through Uganda, Sudan and Egypt to empty in the Mediterranean. Off the coast of Kenya and Tanzania, a channel as large as the Rift Valley runs between the mainland and the out islands. In Rwanda, endangered mountain gorillas struggle to survive in an environment as torn by revolution as by poachers. Hundreds of thousands of people have perished in central Africa from an epidemic called AIDS. It is home to

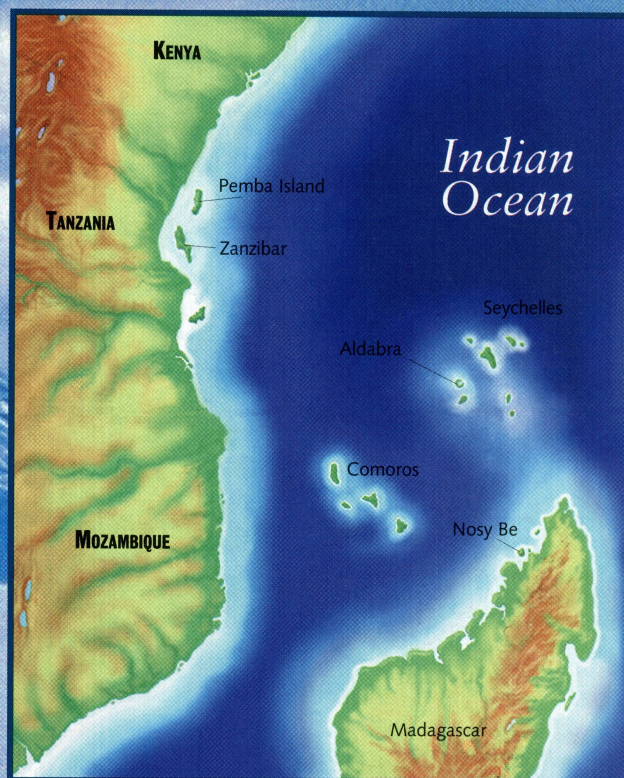
*"...Then they began to climb and they were going to the East it seemed, and then it darkened and they were in a storm, the rain so thick it seemed like flying through a waterfall, and then they were out and Compie turned his head and grinned and pointed and there, ahead, all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro. And then he knew that there was where he was going."*

*from "The Snows of Kilimanjaro,"  
by Ernest Hemingway*



# GA

elephants and whale sharks and tortoises and coco-de-mer trees and lemurs. And for centuries, its mystery has lured explorers and painters and writers and seekers of every kind—Joseph Conrad, Louis Leakey, Stanley Livingston, Ernest Hemingway, Beryl Markham, Isak Dinesen, Peter Mathiessen, Malcolm X. And its riches have lured plunderers from Europe and the Americas for centuries. Its civilizations produced pyramids, trade routes to Europe, and many of the world's most highly valued trade goods—diamonds, gold, spices. Great artists and thinkers and leaders have emerged from its nations—Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Marilyn Makeba, Stephen Biko, Robert Mugabe, Desmond Tutu, Ladysmith Black Mombazo—and always the thousands whose names have rolled beneath the wheel of years. Africa is vast beyond conceptualizing.



THIS IS THE THING: Africa becomes a new idea. What is truly there replaces the image of Africa you have carried and built upon and reimagined through the years. The people's faces are alive, and their eyes see you as you see them. In the dust and blazing heat, the deep belly laughs of women fill unimaginably slow afternoons. Endurance is expected. Beneath the mysterious miles of ocean, lionfish take the place of lions. Mantas slowly wing past and the glittering gray of dolphins breaks the riffling surface of the waves. It is all different, perhaps wilder, perhaps more ordinary. There are countries with coastline and secret places in the hills and the rounded rumps of zebras and the soft whuffing of leopards in the darkness.







# SEYCHELLES

By Norbert Wu

Norbert Wu

**THE** coco-de-mer is some coconut. Taking 25 years to ripen, weighing in at 70 pounds when mature, it could undoubtedly crack the skull of a hippo, if hippos grazed beneath coco-de-mer trees. Fortunately for the hippos, Africa is a thousand miles away from the nearest coco-de-mer tree. But it's not the weight of the nut, nor its age, that has made it famous. This bizarre nut resembles feminine anatomy to a remarkable degree. From one side, it looks exactly like the buttocks of a well-shaped woman. On the other side, well, it doesn't take such imagination to figure out why the nut was much sought after as an aphrodisiac. In the 18th century, these nuts sold for fabulous prices, and their source was a closely guarded mystery. The coco-de-mer tree grows only on Praslin Island, one of the inner isles of the Seychelles archipelago, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, a thousand miles east of Kenya. This is just one of dozens of unique natural treasures in the Seychelles.

Consisting of 115 islands, more than 80 of the Seychelles are inhabited. The inner islands of Mahe, Praslin and La Digue are the main population centers with most of the resorts and hotels. The outer islands—

reached by small planes or long boat trips—are mainly coral atolls, ancient volcanoes which sank into the sea, leaving a string of coral reef and beach around the lip of the old crater. The inner islands drifted away from the African continent millions of years ago. Their geological ancestry is visible in the unique granite formations and tall mountains that serve as a trademark of the Seychelles.

These remote islands offer coral-sand beaches back-dropped by granite formations, first-class resorts, and flora and fauna found nowhere else. Thousands of terns nest on Bird Island, and Aldabra, the planet's largest coral atoll, offers the world's last remaining populations of giant tortoises, found elsewhere only in the Galapagos.

Coupled with the deserted beaches and warm water, the natural beauty of the Seychelles is a source of pride to the local population of 70,000. The Seychellois speak English, French and a form of Creole; American tourists will have no trouble getting around. The resorts are

Norbert Wu



Norbert Wu



Left: The Seychelles offer all the diversity of the Indian Ocean including large anemones like these; Above: Subsistence fisherman work the waters.



world-class, administered under the watchful eye of the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism, which continually evaluates the service and facilities of each hotel.

A popular European destination, few Americans have discovered this special place, which involves a total transit time of nearly 30 hours—not a journey for the faint-of-heart. Exhausted from the flight, we arrived on the main island of Mahe just as the sun was rising. Site of Victoria, the nation's capital city, Mahe is also home to most of the population. The more luxurious hotels (many with a first-rate dive center) are on the beaches of Mahe, and there are several fine diving spots within a mile of the bay.

In Mahe's main bay, L'Ilot, a granite pinnacle, rises 60 feet from the bottom. Depending on the tides, L'Ilot can be a peaceful, relaxing dive in clear still water, or it can turn quickly into an advanced dive where currents rage around the tiny pinnacle. During periods of high current, schools of jack surround the diver with flashes of silver. A dozen eagle rays may flap by in the current, and brilliantly colored soft coral trees open to catch food particles. With a sandy bottom, L'Ilot serves as a gathering place for all manner of marine life.

Other dives around the bay offer fields of giant anemones with anemonefish swimming about within the protective confines of the stinging tentacles, eye-catching candy-striped starfish, and the striped patterns and flaring fins of the lionfish. A fine coral reef extends from the north end of Beau Vallon Bay, and is shallow and close enough to shore to allow for a snorkel from the beach. Mahe presents other wonders of natural history, too. On a sportfishing excursion, we came across the largest fish in the world, the whale shark. Sometimes reaching 60 feet in length, this 20-footer approached our boat curiously, allowing me to swim with it for half an hour. On a hike through the rainforest, I discovered the Seychelles' twig insect, and the leaf frog, the smallest vertebrate in the world.

A short plane ride or boat trip from Mahe gets visitors to the other two inner islands of Praslin and La Digue. The French especially favor La Digue, raving about its serene natural beauty. The park-like island boasts a beach at the south end that is surely the world's most beautiful. Granite formations and palm trees crowd the pink coral sand lapped by limpid water. Few cars are allowed on La Digue; most people get around by oxcart, walking or bicycling. An enormous school of fusiliers and blue-lined snappers populated the single dive I had there around a series of undersea granite pinnacles. Swimming through, we were surrounded by an unbroken piscine wall, flashing yellow, blue, silver.

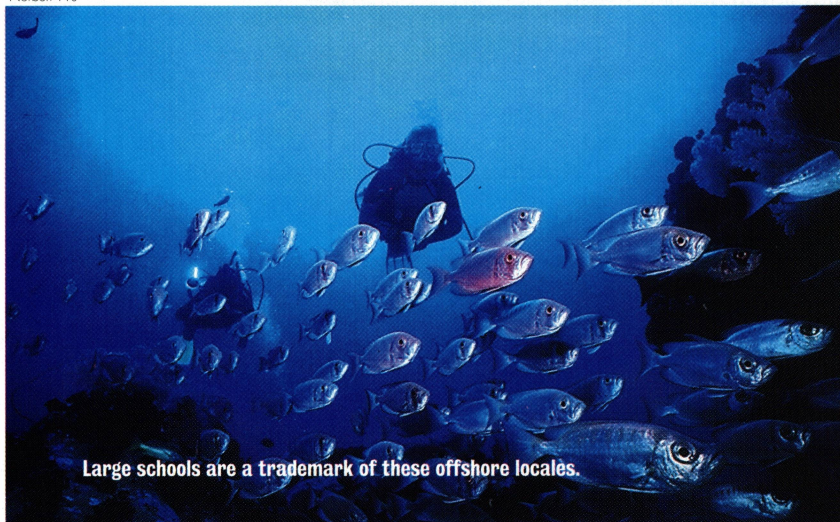
Praslin boasts the Valle de Mai, the enchanted forest where the fabled co-co-de-mer tree flourishes. These bizarre trees, which

grow profusely in this valley (once rumored to be the original Garden of Eden), have been planted on other islands with no success.

Praslin diving is accessible and varied. At one site, we dove around numerous shallow granite outcroppings. Schools of red soldierfish spent the day in coral caves, emerging to feed at night. Under one coral ledge, our guide pointed out the eponymous stonefish, whose spines contain the most lethal poison of the fish world.

My last destination, Desrouches Island, is in the Amirantes chain of the outer islands, an immaculate, classy resort built on a classic desert island in the middle of the tropical ocean. The only inhabitants of Desrouches are the lodge's guests and staff. The real attraction of course is the sense of isolation, of being in a true wilder-

Norbert Wu



Large schools are a trademark of these offshore locales.

ness. Ghost crabs scuttle along milky-pale beaches, and turtles poke their heads out of lagoons for a look at the outsiders. The steep underwater topography makes for thrilling dives over towering cliffs veiled by colorful invertebrate life. A few hundred yards offshore, undersea pinnacles—mountains of coral—come from great depths to within 70 feet of the surface. Bathed by strong currents, those pinnacles host an abundance of large groupers, barracuda, sharks, sea fans and turtles. During the day, schools of fairy basslets surge to and from the shelter of the reef, seeking plankton passing in the current. At night, the basslets sleep deep within the reef, their place taken by large-eyed squirrelfish and soldierfish.

The Seychelles boast much more than I was able to see in three weeks. I look forward to visiting the nesting terns on Bird

Island, the giant tortoises of Aldabra, and the atolls of the Farquhars on my next visit. In the meantime, I carry a memory of the timeless tranquillity of an Indian Ocean desert island as I sit in the traffic jams, smog and heat of a long California summer.



Kenyan rock hyraxes soak up some rays by the pool.





# ALDABRA

By Howard Rosenstein

Lionel Pozzoli

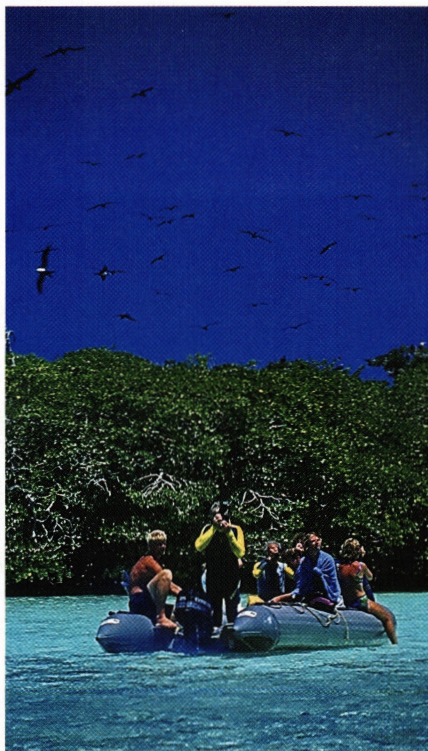
**A**ldabra atoll first came to the attention of the diving world in Jacques Cousteau's classic work, *The Hidden Sea*, chronicling his early expeditions aboard *Calypso*. But Cousteau wasn't the first to be deeply impressed by the unique character of this immense and isolated coral atoll's ecosystem. Charles Darwin battled to protect the island's natural history more than 100 years ago. "Aldabra" wrote Sir Julian Huxley in 1970, "is one of the nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world."

For the time being, at least, it is part of the Seychelles, although geographically closer to Madagascar (250 miles), and the coast of Tanzania (400 miles), than it is to Mahe (715 miles), the Seychelles' main island. Aldabra's isolation has not only shaped a unique ecosystem, it has made it one of the least affected by humans of any of the Indian Ocean islands.

After Cousteau's voyage the site was virtually forgotten except for a few scientists and explorers willing to make the long and often difficult journey to this remote site. But the dramatic accounts in *The Hidden Sea* inspired a modern expedition to explore the unique marine environment of Aldabra atoll and its three sister islands, Assumption, Astove and Cosmeledo. The expedition was led by David Doubilet, premier underwater photographer for *National Geographic* magazine and the spectacular results were featured in the March 1995 issue.

Today Aldabra is more accessible to the dive traveler, although it remains one of the most remote destinations on the map. In 1991 Aldabra was officially opened to small groups of eco-tourists, primarily birders and divers. Most visitors begin their journey with a flight into the capital city of the Seychelles, Victoria, on Mahe. From Mahe, a three-hour commuter flight connects with Assumption Island in the Aldabra group.

**Visitors investigate a few of the many wonders to be found in Aldabra's impressive lagoon**



Howard Rosenstein

A small boomerang-shaped island only 11 square kilometers in size, Assumption is the only true island in the group (the others are atolls). Essentially a raised limestone reef, it was once the site of extensive guano mining. The guano is now severely depicted, but fortunately, the reef remains unaffected. A pristine beach and protected anchorage descend to a wall with a 100-foot drop-off. The shallows are home to a profusion of sea anemones, soft and hard corals, garden eels and a wealth of colorful tropical fish. Along the wall pelagics are common and off the sand patches divers often see mantas, giant sting rays and schools of tarpon.

Ninety miles from Aldabra lies the small atoll of Astove. Legend has it that pirates and the German navy have buried treasure on the island. One thing, though, is certain: Astove, with its vertical walls plunging into the cobalt depths, is a treasure for divers. The north and east sides are home to massive schools of reef fish and large pelagics cruise the open waters. In the shallows, the sand pockets are frequented by giant eagle and sting rays, bat fish and colonies of anemones. The coral walls are riddled with caves commonly sheltering large green sea turtles.

Just 20 miles from Astove lies Cosmeledo, a raised atoll of 12 islets surrounding a large lagoon. Home to large seabird colonies including frigates and boobies, the lee side offers impressive drop-offs from the sloping fringe reef at 60 feet. Giant sea fans and black corals combine with alcyonarian soft corals in vibrant purple, orange, red and yellow. Huge schools of snappers and grunts crowd the waters, large pelagics cruise by well within strobe range, and sea turtles abound. Between dives don't miss the vast aquamarine lagoon where schools of rays scatter in the wake of the dinghy.

The crown jewel of this group is, of course, Aldabra, its rugged coastline spotted with stands of coconut trees and craggy coral rocks interspersed with white sand beaches, all surrounding an immense turquoise lagoon so luminous it seems to cast a greenish glow on the clouds overhead.

Rising from the ocean depths on the eastern rim of the Mozambique Channel, this harsh yet beautiful landscape is volcanic in origin and, so vast is its lagoon, one cannot see from one end to the other. Four main islands surround the lagoon—Picard (home of a research station and nature reserve), Polymnie, Malabar and Grand Terre. These islands are home to over 160,000 giant tortoises, the largest colony in the world. Rare exotic birds like the flightless rail and ibis prowl the under-



growth, and giant coconut crabs greet visitors brandishing claws capable of crushing a coconut husk.

Aldabra's lagoon can best be described as a sea within an ocean. Much of the lagoon is exposed at low tide and best explored on an incoming tide. Giant mushroom rocks crowded with colonies of seabirds, eagle rays, black tip sharks, parrotfish and jacks—they all abound here, usually in less than five feet of water. It's a perfect place to snorkel during surface intervals.

Surrounding the lagoon, a dense forest of mangrove is bisected by a maze of small canals. Here are the nesting sites of the 12 species and subspecies of birds found only on Aldabra. Herons, terns, flamingos, sacred ibis, kestrels—they all live here, as do large populations of nesting seabirds. Aldabra's frigate and booby colonies are the largest in the Indian Ocean.

Described by Cousteau as the most spectacular drift dive anywhere, riding the incoming tidal flow in the deep channels is a thrill. Large concentrations of fish gather opposite the channel entrances to ride the tide into the lagoon in search of food. As you are carried along on the powerful current they are literally everywhere—jacks, barracuda, snappers, eagle rays, nurse sharks, reef sharks, turtles, mantas and giant stingrays—this is truly one of diving's memorable experiences.

Aldabra's outer reef is as rich in marine life as any destination in the Indian Ocean with large schools of reef and pelagic fish and an astonishing variety of invertebrates. For most divers, a plunge on the outer reef alone is worth the trip, but Aldabra has a great deal more to offer—topside, the channels, the lagoon, the mangroves and the outer reef—all of them fascinating habitats filled with a wonderful diversity of species unique to this natural treasure.

.....

In the 33 years it took me to get to East Africa. I've seen quite a few of the world's last wild places. But when I finally made it to Kenya, I felt like I'd plunged into a nature documentary. Hostile zebras surrounded a pair of hunting lions. Like medieval warriors, warthogs galloped, tails held high, through the grass. Antelopes butted heads. Dens of hyenas feasted on a hippopotamus they had killed during the night, more than a mile from the river where the hippos encamped during the day. Giraffes mated under a rainbow that arced across the African blue. And the bones of a gazelle sagged from the branch of an acacia tree where a leopard had hidden it.

Home to the most accessible and prolific wildlife in the world, Kenya's national parks—a photographer's paradise—are a kind of reverse zoo. Here, tourists remain caged inside their vehicles while the animals roam freely—quite a change from the usual.

Like the country's national parks, its capital and largest city, Nairobi, is in the highlands. Temperatures throughout the year are much cooler and dryer than the coast. We chose Nairobi as the embarkation point for our three-week safari—Swahili for "trip."

Amboseli Park, my introduction to the safari, nestles at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Partly because of the herds of elephants that have been re-introduced and protected, the

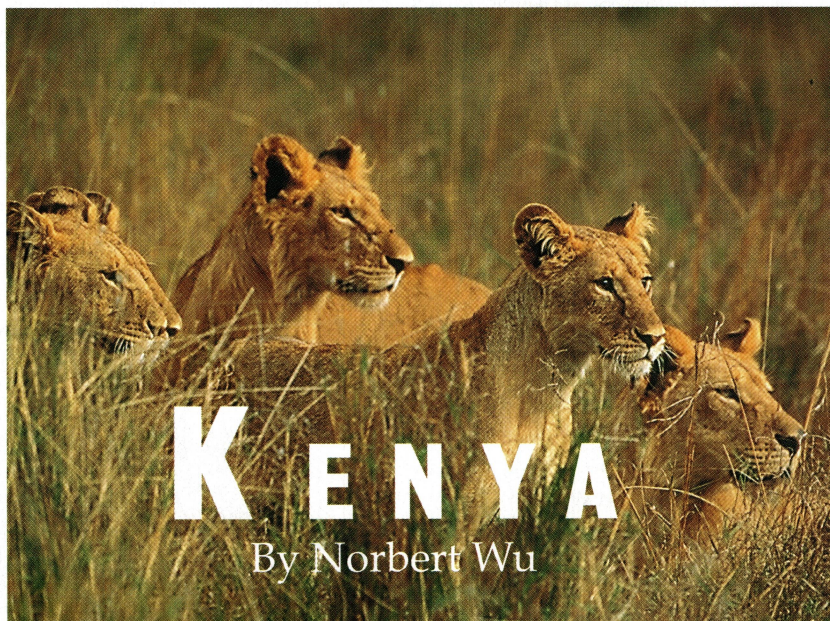


Howard Rosenstein

## Shipshape

The atoll of Aldabra and its sister islands are remote and virtually devoid of tourist infrastructure. Clearly a live-aboard is the best way to go, but there are few options for those dedicated adventure seekers who wish to dive these pristine waters and explore this unique landscape. In fact, there is only one. Fortunately, it's one of the best you could hope for—the 115-foot live-aboard dive vessel Fantasea II. Fantasea Cruises runs eight 12- and 14-day expeditions each year, from February to May, and from October to December. They began making regularly scheduled expeditions to the island in 1992.

The Fantasea II is an ocean-going Lloyds class 100 A1 yacht. It has six fully air-conditioned ensuite cabins, satellite telephone and fax, large shaded decks, unlimited fresh water and open ocean capability with an 8,000-mile range. An international crew of 10 provides excellent service. See the Travel Planner on page 105 for more information.



Norbert Wu

By Norbert Wu

trees have been destroyed in most of the park making it a dry, dusty flatland where it is possible to see vast distances. In the days we spent there, vervet monkeys roamed the grounds of the lodge. Baboons played on the soccer fields. And in the distance, the mysterious Masai



walked, spears in hand, their brilliant red robes like jewels against the dusty ground and the green of the acacias. As we left Amboseli, the clouds parted and the snow-capped peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro towered behind two grazing elephants.

Widely considered the centerpiece of any Kenya stay, the Masai Mara is the African savannah of legend, part of the vast Serengeti plains which extend into Tanzania. Traveling in November, I missed the legendary wildebeest migrations. However, without the huge herds, the opportunity to watch cheetahs and lions was much better. I spent hours with one female cheetah as she tracked gazelles through the scrub bush. She nursed her cubs,

ed to the elephant, fed on blossoms, and lounged around the pool soaking up rays.

In this rhythm of watching, tracking and photographing, we passed a couple of weeks before making our way back to Nairobi. Time for a bit of wet adventure. I hopped a plane for the coastal town of Malindi, the diving portion of my Kenyan safari.

Diving season here on Kenya's southern coast is September to April. And in the lowlands, it's warm and humid. Water temperature hovers near 80° on the miles of coral barrier reef. Just a hundred yards offshore from our hotel, Watamu Marine Park is just one of the four major

marine parks the Kenyan government has established to protect its miles of spectacular shoreline.

The diving in Watamu, Africa's first marine park, varies from truly spectacular to turbid and dark.

Because it's off the mainland coast, runoff has a lot to do with the conditions. At the same time, you'll find a greater abundance of life than in the less fertile waters off deserted islands.

I was struck by the many schools of fish—small fry formed huge shimmering balls at 60 feet, and at the surface, I swam with dark masses of juvenile fish as they sought shelter under

the protection of my body. I encountered nudibranchs, crowds of lionfish, stonefish, and an assortment of other Indian Ocean species. Visitors in the summer months—January and February—are more likely to encounter whale sharks, but dolphins, mantas and reef sharks may be seen at any season.

Journeying south along the coast, Shimoni, just at the border with Tanzania, is a remote access point for some of the region's best diving, as well as a jumping off point for live-aboard departures to Tanzania's Pemba Island. From Shimoni, take advantage of access to the Kisite Marine

Park, about five miles offshore, where you can snorkel or dive along the fringing reef—reputedly some of the most stunning underwater landscape in East Africa.

Whatever your experience, the marine parks of Watamu and Shimoni are well worth a look, whether it's before or after your inland African safari.

I left Kenya vowing to return. In August at the height of the wildebeest migration, when the crocodiles are smiling at the grazers' return, and the entire plains are exploding with life, I'll be there. [For information on joining Wu on an African safari, see the *Soundings* calendar this issue.]

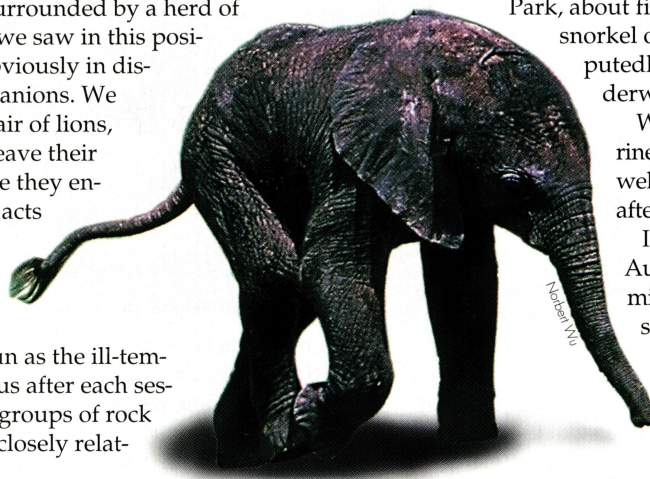
## The predators were not all successful— each individual animal had its own skills.

missed a kill, then in desperation went after two fighting impalas. They easily stood her off, then, in a testosterone frenzy, went back to butting heads. A pair of cheetahs, obviously suffering from their lack of skill, huddled in the rain after missing several opportunities to catch prey and alerting the grazers to their presence. As a large cat passed through the grazing grounds, the antelopes and zebra assumed characteristic postures, alerting other members of the herd to the presence of a predator, then all the animals followed the cat. The cat's only chance, once a herd was aware of its presence, was to travel on to another hunting ground, sometimes miles away.

In two weeks in the Masai Mara, I developed a sense of life on the African savannah. The predators were not all successful—instead, each individual animal had its own skills. Cheetahs missed as often as they struck, Lionesses got separated from the rest of the pride in the night and woke in the morning, surrounded by a herd of hostile zebras. The one we saw in this position called piteously, obviously in distress at losing her companions. We came across a mating pair of lions, who characteristically leave their pride for two days while they engage in nearly 100 brief acts of mating. The male seemed to be in a foul mood after each coupling, and our driver kept the van ready to run as the ill-tempered lion approached us after each session. Back at the lodge, groups of rock hyrax, small mammals closely relat-



Amos Nachoum



Norbert Wu





DIVE GUIDE



# PEMBA

By Fred Dembny & Hans-Joachim Schwarz

Life on Pemba Island goes on as it has for centuries like it does here on its sister island, Zanzibar.

Laena Marie Wilder

**N**ever try to change Africa." This was the wise advice given to me by an African, and he was probably right. After all, everyone's been trying to do exactly that—unsuccessfully—on Pemba for centuries. Not the colonialists of Portugal, England and Germany, not the trade routes of the Arabs, not even Karl Marx, whose socialist tenets most recently altered the face of modern Tanzania. No, Pemba, the northern island in the Zanzibar atoll, retreated into itself, with the good and bad that comes with such actions. Here children still back off in surprise at the face of a non-African tourist. It makes you realize that MTV and CNN aren't everywhere yet.

But if those channels wanted to cover all the hot news, one of the spots they should definitely hit is Pemba...underwater. The diving off Pemba is spectacular and a real spectacle of colors. Between the mainland of Kenya and Pemba Island flows the Pemba Channel, a geological wonder equal in size to Africa's other amazing chasm, the Rift Valley. The water of Pemba Channel has gouged amazing passages and canyons into the flat bottom below. The result for the diver? Drop-off after drop-off. Amazingly enough, the placid beaches above are only a stone's throw from the deepest gorges.

The marine vegetation resembles that of the Red Sea. On top, the colored frenzy of all shapes and forms of coral blankets the narrow

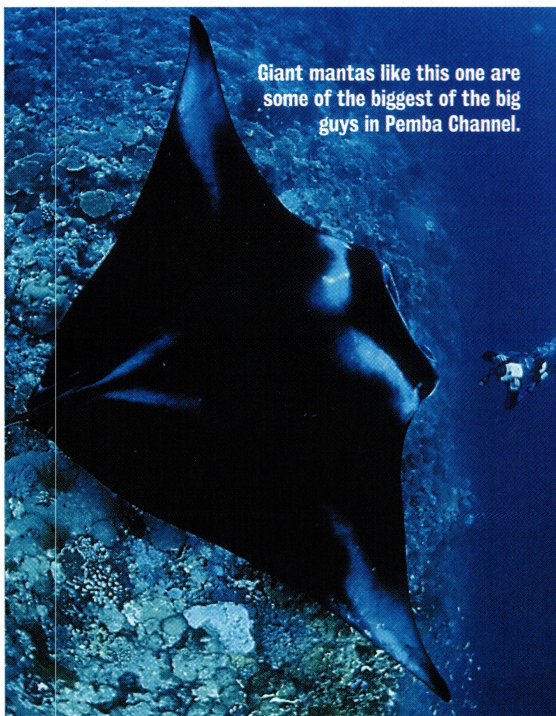
plateaus. Farther below, small niches along the face of the walls house a multitude of creatures. And then, off into the blue, all the superstars of the sea swing by to feed—although it's important to remember that the time of year plays a large role in how many of the celebs display their mugs for the paparazzi.

So it's only natural that since Pemba offers the deepest of the deep, that the biggest of the big guys tend to hang around here. "Napoleons as big as VWs," was the promise made to me by the head of Diani-Marine, Thomas Sollacher. "Gorgonians as big as oak trees," he embell-

ished. I'm here to offer veracity to these wild claims: They're true.

The impact of the currents flowing through the reef around Pemba brings out the wildest scenes. Like the great slowly winging creatures at Manta Point, or the swirling barracudas at the Uvinji Gap, waiting patiently en masse with their mouths wide open for anything tasty to come floating in. Unspoiled tracts of water enclose sections of reef and fill remote bays with hard and soft corals, barrel and tube sponges, and Indian Ocean fish of every size and variety. At Panga ya Watoro, four species of endangered turtles—log-

*Continued on page 112*



Giant mantas like this one are some of the biggest of the big guys in Pemba Channel.

Amos Nachoum





# Nosy Be, Madagascar

By Jay Ireland & Georgienne Bradley

Jay Ireland/Georgienne Bradley

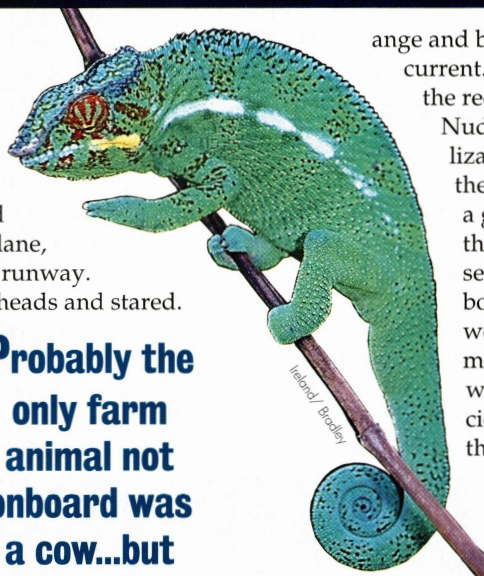
**C**ows!" the passenger across the aisle screamed. "Cows!" A few seconds later the exclamation became clear—cows on the runway. Hell, the place was infested with bovines. Our plane circled as three irate men, arms waving, herded them off the airstrip. As we left the plane, the Zebu cows wandered back to the runway. They stopped munching, lifted their heads and stared. Hey Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.

Wanting a taste of the local Madagascar experience, we opted to travel by bus to our hotel. After loading our gear onto the already jammed vehicle, we rode with our knees pressed to our chests. Stopping often, the bus gathered more passengers, more luggage, more household items and more livestock. Probably the only farm animal not on board was a cow...but we couldn't be sure...judging by the smell, there may have been one somewhere in the back.

Located off the northwestern coast of Madagascar, Nosy Be is considered a tropical sanctuary. From the tranquil deep-blue crater lakes of Mont Passot to the hyperactive marketplace, Nosy Be is an island of extreme contrast. Fields of yellow-flowering ylang-ylang trees and breathtaking forest landscapes are contrasted by severe slash and burn devastation. The carefree antics of the cuddly lemurs seem out of place as they face extinction, and the friendly smiles the local people shared communicated that they haven't a care in the world, although many live in extreme poverty. The beauty and luxury available at our hotel set off sharply the indigence we witnessed en route.

Over 80 percent of the animal life in Madagascar is en-

**Probably the  
only farm  
animal not  
onboard was  
a cow...but  
we couldn't  
be sure**



Ireland/Bradley

charged our fins. Those small fish—a fraction of our size—were fearlessly defending their symbiotic mate, a magnificent carpet anemone.

Reversing position, we realized there were other anemone residents. A miniature dappled crab bravely lifted its claws in defense as we approached. From under the ledge peered throngs of miniature catfish. Boiling over each other, they provided us with yet another great photo opportunity. There seemed no end to the vibrant animal life and we

dem. Local enthusiasm for this fact has translated into efforts to preserve all remaining wild areas of Nosy Be. Evidence of the success of these labors can be seen throughout the island. One important victory was the declaration of Nosy Tanikely Island as a National Reserve, a designation that insures governmental protection for the pristine land ecosystem, as well as the vibrant surround reef.

After hearing about the intricacies of Nosy Tanikely, we were primed. This small satellite islet promised to reveal some spectacular dive experiences. In the water, we immediately understood why the area is protected.

A garden of huge burnt orange and brilliant red sea fans swayed in the current. Even the sandy area surrounding the reef was chock full of creatures.

Nudibranchs, a guitar shark and two lizardfish greeted us as we approached the reef. The unusual guitar shark was a great photographic subject. Under the false impression that we couldn't see it camouflaged against the sandy bottom, it stayed totally motionless as we set up our equipment. The moment we began clicking the shutter, we were rudely interrupted by a vicious attack on our feet. Whoa, who's that? Two anemonefish repeatedly



Marine catfish swarm over the reef

Jay Ireland/Georgienne Bradley



had not even moved from our original descent spot. It proved our diving philosophy once again. Some folks believe the faster they swim, the more they'll see. Our approach is different; go slowly, see a lot. We may not cover as much territory, but we give ourselves the opportunity to really experience what's there. Our entire dive continued in this way, one curious spectacle after another. The only drawback? We exhausted the film in all three cameras long before we ran out of air.

Knowing the intrigue of the island does not stop at the shoreline, we arranged a day-long excursion to the Lokobe Reserve. Getting there was half the experience. A humid hike through a mangrove swamp ended at the ocean's edge and our waiting dugout canoe. Although the rustic vessel looked less than seaworthy, we were clearly

Lokobe has lemurs—clinging to trees and clinging to a precarious, threatened existence.

Jay Ireland/Georgienne Bradley

past the point of no return. The four inches of water in the bottom of the vessel was disheartening, but when we were handed buckets to bail the canoe while en route we knew we should have our heads examined.

After a tumultuous crossing, bailing frantically all the while,

we reached the other side of the bay and our destination. It was worth every anxious second.

A native village stretched along the beach. The residents allowed us to practice our broken Malagasy and responded kindly, although doubtless we made little or no sense. After visiting the village we began a rigorous hike through the Lokobe Reserve. Our guide spotted numerous jungle subjects, his attuned eye uncovering hordes of rainforest-obscured animals. We fell in love with the lemurs clinging to tree limbs, chewing leaves. The brilliance of the chameleons was breathtaking and the glistening boa constrictors along the trail were astoundingly beautiful. A trip highlight indeed—the visit to Lokobe was an opportunity to view untouched rainforest areas, and in doing so, to understand the importance of rallying international attention on the protection of these disappearing treasures.

Sure, getting to a destination as remote as Nosy Be is expensive, the flight tedious, and the travel conditions, well, to say they're unpredictable is kind. All that said and done, Nosy Be proved to be—both above and below the surface—a great adventure, and well worth the time and effort.



Magic glitters in every corner of Nosy Be

Jay Ireland/Georgienne Bradley

## South Africa

By Charles Ballinger

In case you hadn't heard, South Africa recently joined the world community. Having shed the shackles apartheid, this bountiful country is finally free to enjoy the privileges of international acceptance. One of the beneficiaries will be the South African diving industry and, closer to home, those of us who can pack our regulators and get over there.

For the uninitiated, South African waters contain vibrant reefs and great wreck diving. **Most divers prefer the eastern coastline** where the south-running Mozambique current flows all the way to Cape Town. The chilly Atlantic current, flowing north, sweeps up the western coast. A tour of South African dive spots might begin on either end of its coastline.

In the north, South Africa borders Mozambique at about 27 degrees latitude. The area known as **Northern Maputaland has the country's only tropical marine environment**. Predominantly Indian Ocean marine life, it also has southern ocean fishes, European fishes via the west African coast, circumglobal fishes, deep sea fishes and endemic South African species. The reefs of the remote Sodwana area have long been considered South Africa's premier dive spot.

**Sodwana reefs attract more than 60,000 divers** every year, an impressive figure when you consider the long journey across the Makhlatini Flats over rough, twisting dirt roads. Conditions can be challenging and unpredictable, too, but the payoff is worth the effort.

The area can be explored from Two Mile Reef all the way out to Nine Mile Reef. Two Mile is easily accessed and perfect for beginners. Nine Mile is home of a spectacular coral tree that has been named a national monument. Large schools of lemonfish, Moorish idols, snappers and morays call this reef home. The area can be dived year-round, although conditions are variable.

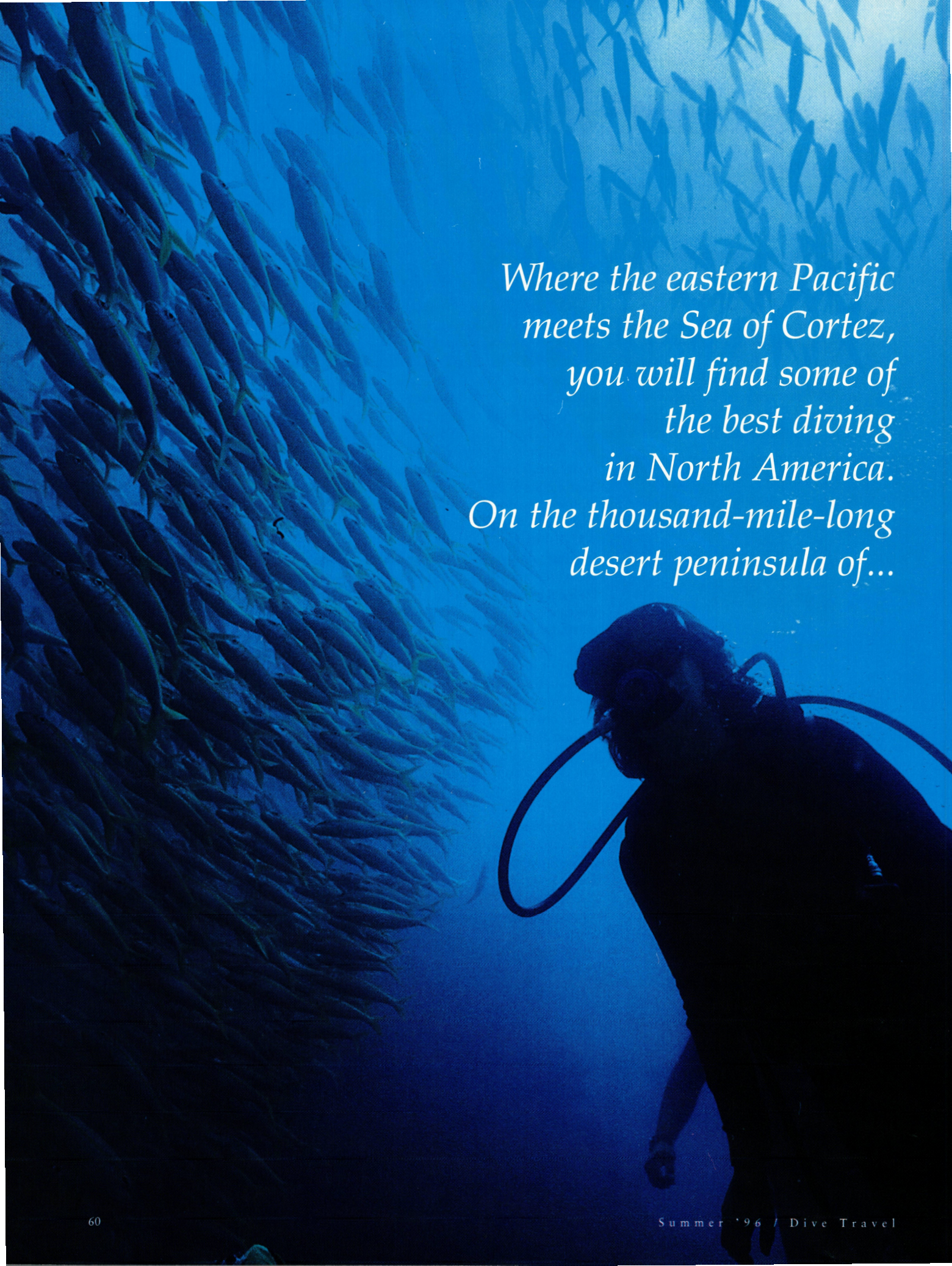
Heading south, the next stop is Umhlanga and Aliwal Shoal, just north of Durban. Because of the river the reefs farther out offer the best diving.

**Southern Natal offers adventurous diving** on reefs that are deeper and have stronger currents. Your dive companions might include hammerhead and Zambie sharks. Don't miss the colorful reefs of Port Alfred. Plettenberg Bay is quite popular, as is Mossel Bay farther south.

A South African diving safari begins or ends near Cape Town, where hundreds of unlucky ship captains have contributed to the sport of wreck diving. Another hot ticket here are the white shark research expeditions. **The White Shark Research Institute** offers sport divers a chance to observe the great white from boat and cage and their success rate is nearly 100 percent.

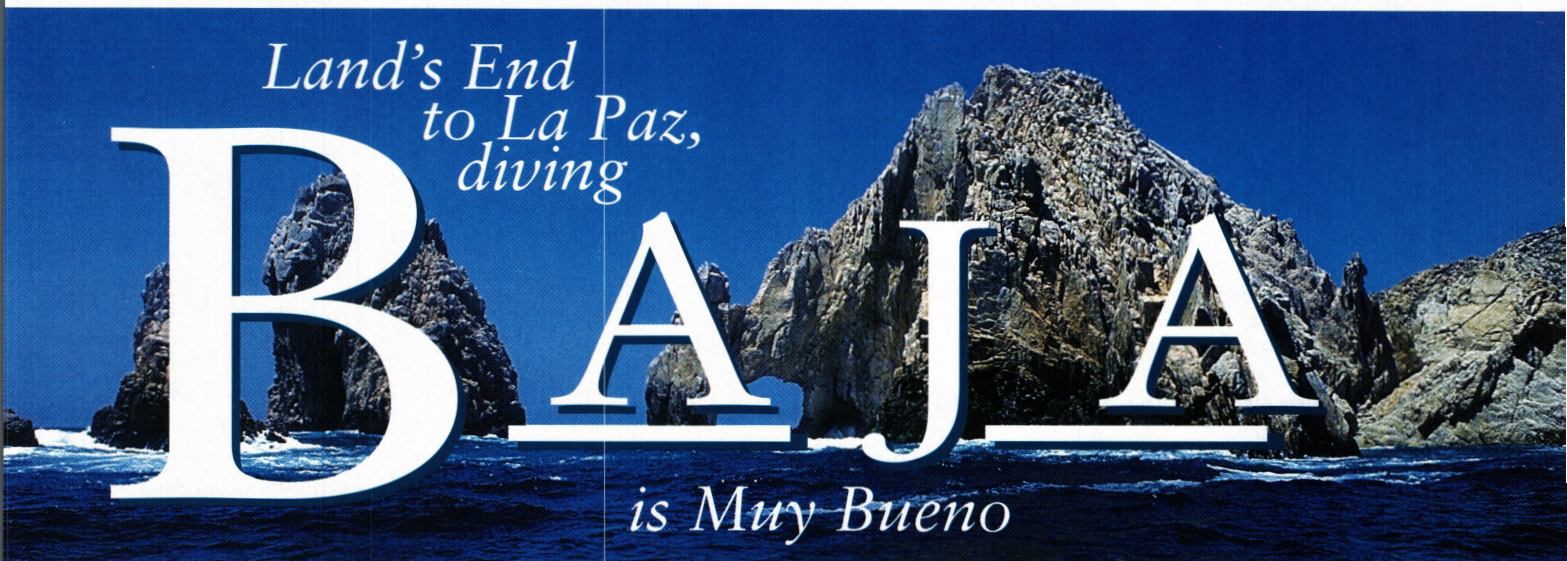
A morning dive in South Africa can be followed by an afternoon safari. **Where else can your surface intervals be just as exciting as your bottom time?**





*Where the eastern Pacific  
meets the Sea of Cortez,  
you will find some of  
the best diving  
in North America.  
On the thousand-mile-long  
desert peninsula of...*





*Land's End  
to La Paz,  
diving*

# B A J A

*is Muy Bueno*

Gill Cruz

Ever thought about getting away from it all for a few days—somewhere warm, near the water, close to civilization, but not too close, offering a menu of activities to distract you from the stress of everyday existence? But of course you—like the rest of us—don't want to pay an arm and a leg for the privilege. If you reside in the west, just look south, to the end of that 1000-mile-long desert peninsula called Baja.

Two towns, Cabo San Lucas and La Paz, flank, like bookends, the southern Baja region. Off the coast from both towns, and along the miles of shoreline between, you'll find terrific diving. The topography of the cape region, as it's sometimes called, combines characteristics of both arid and tropical regions. Along the Sea of Cortez, wetlands pocket the baysides, and mangrove forests and salt marshes dot the numerous lagoons. Inland, cardons and cereus cactus raise their pleated arms in desert prayer. And the wildlife so prolific above water continues beneath the sea's surface.

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BY GILL CRUZ

Gill Cruz



Situated at the tip of Baja, Cabo San Lucas boasts that identifying milestone, the Land's End granite arch and pinnacles jutting from the sea, signaling the end of the rugged landmass. At this geologically auspicious point, the indigo waters of the Pacific meet the Sea of Cortez.

The southern cape region, comprised of two major tourist areas, Cabo San Lucas and its lesser known neighbor 22 miles to the north, San Jose del Cabo, runs from Punta Pescadero to Cabo San Lucas. The entire area is accessible either from Highway One, or unpaved roads that shadow the shore and penetrate the interior. White sand beaches fringe the coast. Volcanic in origin, many rock outcroppings break up the long expanses of sand, adding rugged character to the coastline.

Not too far inland, austere beautiful

***If you visit for reasons other than diving, there's plenty to do, with most activities involving the water***

desert dominates the landscape. The farther you travel from the resorts, the more the area resembles other parts of Mexico. Along the west coast, the dirt road winds through the villages of Los Pozos, Migrinos, Pescadero and Todos Santos. Following the unpaved roads after passing through San Jose del Cabo, there are many small villages and some airstrips. This primitive area is definitely worth exploring. Mountains command the interior, with natural aquifers supplying water to coastal villages.



Explore a few of Baja's wrecks, you won't be disappointed

Al Bruton

Schooling hammerheads, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, are among Baja's great diving attractions

ed to some stereotypical notion of Vacation. If you visit for reasons other than diving, there's plenty to do: sport fishing, golf, sailing, parasailing, and the omnipotent partying—with most activities involving the water.

For many Cabo visitors, scuba diving is the chosen activity. Facilities are abundant, and there are numerous guides qualified to show you the sites. Diving this region offers a taste of coral reefs at Cabo Pulmo; mantas, hammerheads and whale sharks at Gorda Banks; and walls and sand falls at Land's End in Cabo. If live-aboards are your preference, the

*Solmar V* offers trips to the Socorro Islands and the Sea of Cortez.

Perhaps the most unique of Cabo's dives, Cabo Pulmo is the only collection of coral reefs on the west coast of North America and in the Sea of Cortez. A two-hour drive along winding unpaved roads from Cabo brings you to this site. Dives are made from shore in 18-foot open boats driven by men who are surely retired race-car drivers. Because of the transit time, two dives are typical per trip, unless you stay in the area.

Lengthy ridges of igneous rock comprise the dive area, running from the southern end of Cabo Pulmo Bay and projecting in a northerly direction. Below, the undersides of the table-like rock formations are carpeted with a diverse collection of coral formations, with species ranging from tubastrea and gorgonians to small sea fans. The outermost reef, El Bajo, is just 50 to 55 feet deep. Visibility typically runs between 40 to 70 feet, even better during the fall months.

Peering down from the surface is deceiving; the first thing you see is a barren rock plateau stretching before you. But as soon as you descend below the ledges, the beauty unfolds. Beneath each ledge and most overhangs,



a profusion of life competes for available food and shelter. Sea fans are so close together that they provide shelter for fish and other marine life.

Balloonfish and spotted porcupinefish pose for the photographer. Cornetfish work the reef, along with schools of Mexican goatfish and grunts. Blue and gold snapper present a wave of iridescent yellow and blue, and at the edge, waving fields of garden eels make a home in the

quent them. It is not uncommon to see manta rays cruising by. On one dive, I was on the rocks adjusting my camera when I looked up and saw the largest hammerhead I've ever seen circling me. Just as quickly it disappeared.

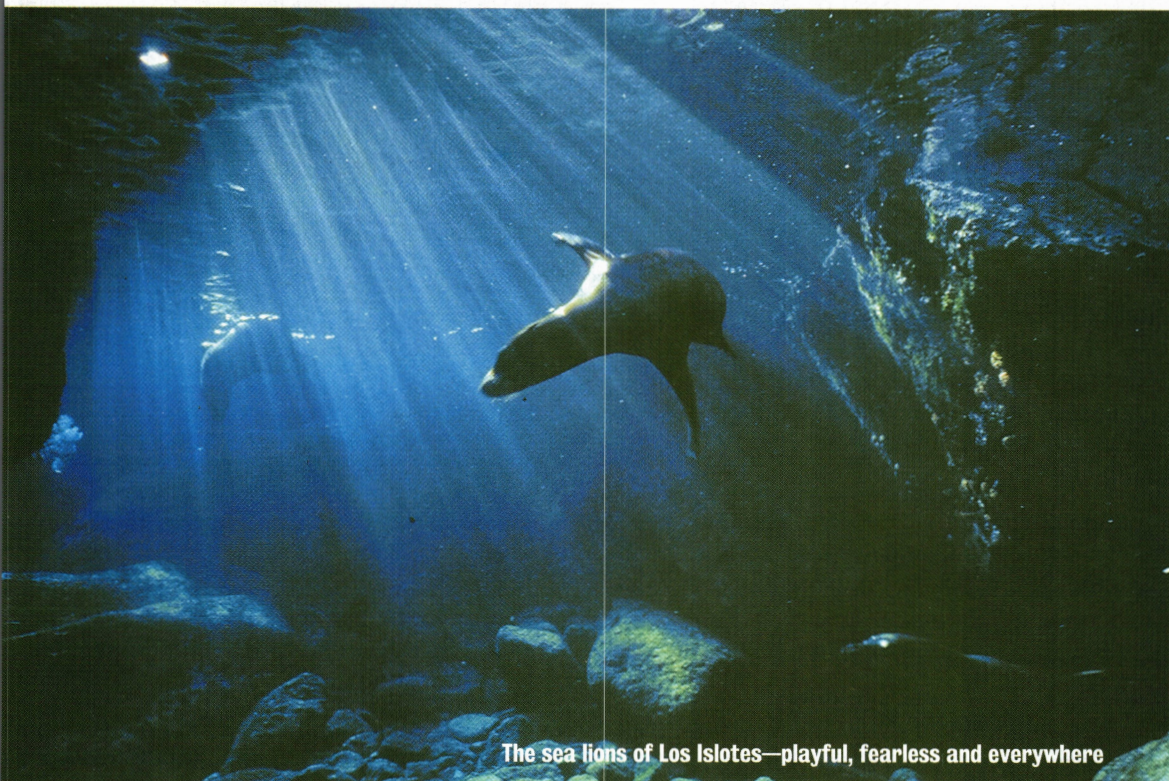
Invertebrates and reef fish carpet the Banks. The fish schools part as you pass through, then close ranks immediately behind. Yellowfin, bonito and dorado dart through the

than going on your own; safety and local knowledge are definitely key here. This site is a must-stop—you never know when the big action will take place.

Ten miles south of San Jose del Cabo is Puerto Chileno, a popular site for novice to intermediate divers. Depths are from shallow to 60 feet, and the current is slight. A bank of rock walls begins high above the shoreline and stretches along Chileno

Bay. Translated to the underwater zone, the rocks form tables that run out to sea in finger-shaped reefs, a network of pockets and crevices that are home to a delightful collection of invertebrates and other marine life. Prolific reef fish populate the scene. Take advantage of these guys for some great macro photo ops.

Entry to Puerto Chileno can be from the beach, or from a boat launched from Cabo San Lucas. Visibility is good to very good, and the water temperature is in the low 80s at the surface, the low 70s at depth. After a full



The sea lions of Los Islotes—playful, fearless and everywhere

Al Bruton

sand. Longnose butterflyfish cruise the reef in pairs, while guineafowl puffers add more variety to this watery paradise. Cabo Pulmo is arguably one of the best land-based dive sites in Baja. The diving is well-worth the effort necessary for the ride there—rugged desert on every side, and superb diving.

For a great contrast to Cabo Pulmo, try Gorda Banks—equally exciting, but for different reasons. Here, a seamount six miles east of Punta Gorda rises to within 100 feet of the surface. This is an open-ocean site—currents sweep the banks, and the swells can be intimidating. Advanced diving skills are necessary. Just descending the anchor line can be a thrill. Because Gorda Banks is a feeding ground, many pelagic species fre-

schooling fish, hopefuls looking to snag dinner. There's lots of action, so keep your eyes open.

Visibility varies through the year, with plankton tending to limit visibility to about 50 feet, but once you make your way through that, visibility increases to 100 feet. The ride out and back can be fun, too, if the boat operator sets out fishing lines, and dorado practically jump onto the hook. It's an easy way to bag dinner.

All the Cabo operators run trips to Gorda Banks. Use an operator rather

***The rocks form tables that run out to sea like finger-shaped reefs, pockets and crevices that are home to a delightful collection of invertebrates and other marine life.***

diving day, this is a good last dive. For the tidepooler, Puerto Chileno is a gold mine—more marine life than you might imagine.

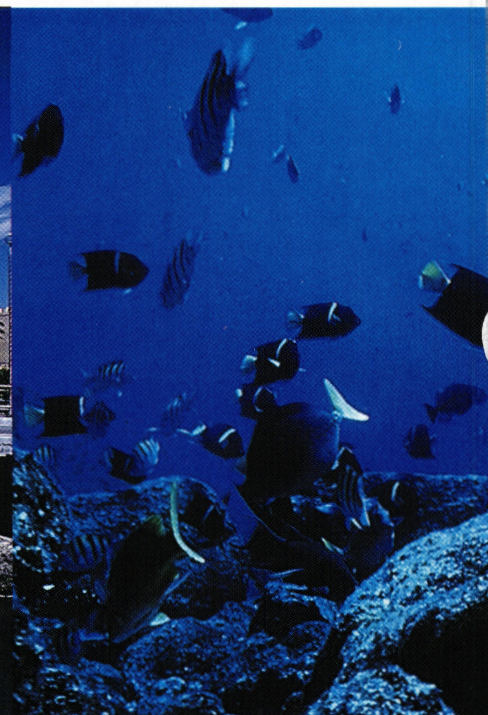
The Cabo San Lucas area itself has a number of sites very close to the harbor—most protected by the granite pinnacles that make up Land's





A local net fisherman in La Paz...

Al Bruton



Gary Colter

End. Bahia San Lucas has an inner harbor area for smaller craft and a large outer bay where the sites are located. A deep submarine canyon begins just beyond the inner harbor and stretches like a fan out to sea. The canyon and terrain provide an ideal environment for a diverse collection of marine life. The Land's End dive site lies just past the Pacific entrance of the bay. Sea lions have colonized the majestic granite pinnacles. And the barren rocks plunge toward the verge of the submarine canyon at 80-plus feet. On calm days, this is an easy dive; however, when the current increases it picks up fast. A knowledgeable operator is a must.

The entire Bahia San Lucas is an underwater park and marine sanctuary. Octopus, cornetfish, enormous schools of yellowtail, hogfish, porcupinefish and more live here in abundance. Fish photography and wide-angle images are the order of the day. Warm, clear and usually flat are the most appropriate adjec-

tives for this spot—Cabo's most popular site for divers.

The Sand Falls at the edge of the submarine canyon is the unique spot in this area. From the surface, the beach appears to continue into the water. It actually flows all the way to the gorges and canyons carved millenniums ago. Waves of sand migrate downward through crevices, eventu-

***Waves of sand migrate downward through crevices, approaching the steep drop-offs and vertical cliffs. Here, the sand gains speed, becoming a granular waterfall, tumbling slowly into the abyss.***

ally approaching the steep drop-offs and vertical cliffs at 100 feet. Here, the sand gains speed, becomes a granular waterfall, tumbling slowly into the abyss.

Among the barren, jagged terrain at the canyon's edge, a thick growth of sea fans and gorgonians thrive.

The fish life is more characteristic of the Indo-Pacific tropical islands—and prolific. Pelagics frequent the area because of the nutrient-rich current and upwellings that support their food habits. Although this site may not be at the top of the list for photographers, its unique qualities make it a worthwhile stop for any diver.

There are other sites in Bahia San Lucas and points east that I have not covered, each with its own idiosyncracies that beckon the adventurous diver. Los Frailes near Cabo Pulmo, Punta Gorda and Punta Palmilla near San Jose del Cabo, Cabeza Ballena, Detached Rock, Shepherd's Rock, La Bufadora and the Sunken Ship in Bahia San Lucas are some of these sites that should not be missed.

Don't even think about diving Cabo San Lucas in just one trip. I have found multiple visits necessary to adequately appreciate what the area has to offer. The town has all the amenities of home—if you want them. The degree to which you escape dictates the amount of fun you'll have. Take a break, buy a ticket and head south. Cabo awaits.





...trying to roundup a few of the other locals

★★★★★

It's difficult to imagine that a city with more than 170,000 people exists anywhere on the primitive desert of the Baja California peninsula, but La Paz is, and does. A modern port, trading center and resort city, La Paz used to be a sleepy, dusty pueblo at the edge of the Sea of Cortez. The relaxed atmosphere reflects the local desire to maintain some of the old character and customs. As the town has grown, restaurants, bars, businesses and tourism have grown with it. Today, La Paz is home to great sport fishing and boating, and diving from beach, day boat or live-aboard.

Diving arrangements can be made through the major hotels and the dive shops. Unfortunately, beach diving is less than desirable because of the scarcity of good nearby sites.

Typically a beach site requires a long swim to a drop-off, or settling for a closer sand area with little marine life. The influx of people and the associated commerce has had a deleterious effect on the marine life near-shore.

Boat dives are the best alternative for diving in this area. The three most popular sites are Partida and Espiritu Santo islands, Los Islotes and El Bajo.

*Continued on page 118*

## A Pleasant Mambo South of the Border

BY PLEASANT WILLIAMS JR.



For us growing up in provincial LA, 101 was the magic highway that could somehow transport you to fabled Mexico. As a kid I was amazed that a road that intersected Sunset Boulevard stretched from our everyday world to Baja California, a place where towns held such exotic-sounding names as Ensenada, Cabo San Lucas, La Paz.

In those days, what with dependable air travel, mind-bendingly slow train rides and roads better suited to burros, Mexico attracted a harder breed of traveler. My father, Pleasant Senior, was one of these. Stateside, he was a working musician, an arranger and composer, and later in his career a record producer. But south of the border, he was a fisherman. The coastal towns were beacons for fishermen like Pleasant then as they are today, offering a combination of sport and play that was well nigh irresistible.

I've still got a few black-and-white 8X10s of Pleasant Senior standing in front of large scaffolds from which hung the unfortunate marlin he'd boated off the Baja coast. These sporting events were documented in standard photos, a form of trophy provided by the port. The format is always the same whether the fish was caught off Kona, La Paz or Mazatlan. There'd be one of those black signboards with the movable white letters de-

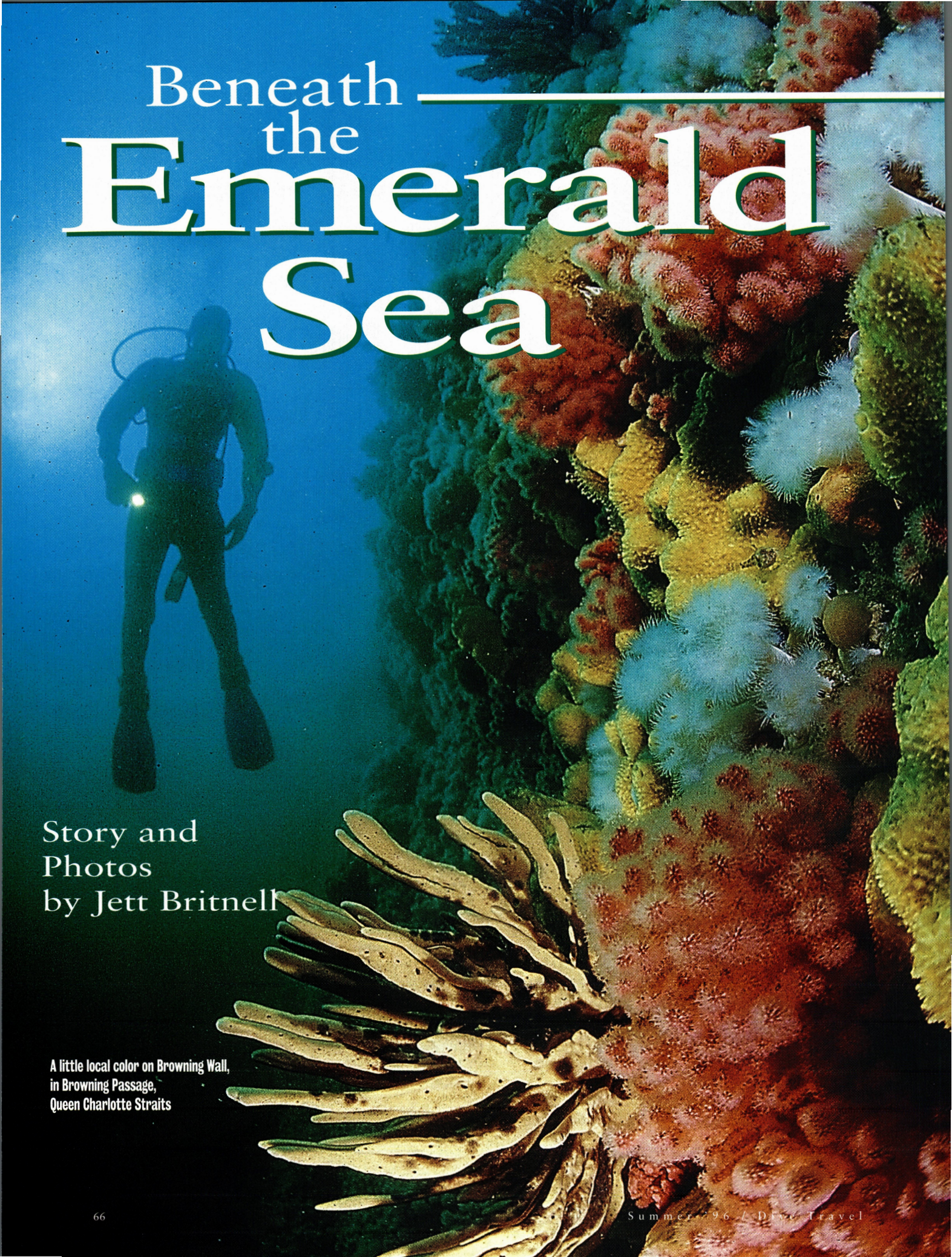
tailoring the specs: time, species, weight, tackle, angler, boat and skipper. The angler posed in front of the great fish, rod and reel in hand. Behind him, the huge wall-eyed beasts were hung by the tail and appeared not so much dead as enchanted. Sometimes a pretty senorita was shown administering a kiss to the cheek of the courageous angler. This, a symbolic reward for the intrepid gringo who'd braved the elements and vanquished the great beast.

One of the more memorable of these photos featured my father and a particularly burly 300-pound black marlin. It's night time, I imagine toward midnight, and Pleasant is standing next to his buddy, an expressionless Carlos Gastel. No big smiles and smug victory cheer here. Their limp postures reek of exhaustion, their faces expressionless mug shots. They'd been fishing with light tackle (25-pound test linen, I'd guess) using small reels—Penn Senators—no bigger than what you'd use for albacore. Clearly the fight had taken its toll. Four hours strapped into a fighting chair is an ordeal to be sure, but I think what really took it out of them were those nights in the bars, that, the morning's Bloody Marys (a little hair of the dog that bit you) and the relentless Mexican sun.

Aside from the blood sport, I think what Pleasant and his cohorts most loved about Mexico was drinking and carousing in the local cantinas. In those unself-conscious days before we had elaborate resorts to insulate us from the local citizenry, there were no separate facilities for gringos. Back then, you partied in the cantinas with the lo-

*Continued on page 119*





# Beneath the Emerald Sea

Story and  
Photos  
by Jett Britnell

A little local color on Browning Wall,  
in Browning Passage,  
Queen Charlotte Straits



*If you automatically think tropics when you sit down to plan a dive trip, you're missing out on one of the last true dive travel adventures in the rugged beauty of Canada's west coast*

**F**ifteen years of diving in the emerald sea and I had never seen anything like it—a swirling mass of black rockfish, the sheer numbers were overwhelming, even to a seasoned marine photojournalist. At the edge of visibility, I could see a spectral figure finning toward me. The surging whirlpool of rockfish parted allowing my dive buddy, Nissa, to join me. Onboard our charter vessel, the *MV Clavella*, she's affectionately known as the dive-master from hell. Today, however, with nary a hint of hellaciousness, she affably points out a dinner plate-sized, fish-eating tealia anemone. Large and swarming sea life is *de rigueur* here off the Queen Charlotte Islands on the west coast of British Columbia.

The tangled western Canadian coastline, freckled with islands, snow-capped mountainous fjords and evergreen-clad shores, meanders more than 17,000 picturesque miles along the Pacific coast of North America. Larger than many nations, Canada's western-most province has emerged to become one of the world's premier vacation destinations. The emerald green waters are renowned for the world's best cold water diving. Uncrowded reefs and an overwhelming diversity provide exciting diving opportunities for novice and experienced divers alike. And contrary to persistent rumors, the waters are really not that chilly. The local ocean temperatures are about the same as those in Monterey, California.

#### **The Queen Charlottes**

In recent years some of the more remote corners of British Columbia have come to the attention of the diving public. It started when a few adventurous dive charter operators began delving deeper into B.C.'s aboriginal culture, taking guests a little farther off-the-beaten-path—to abandoned Haida Indian villages in the Canadian Galapagos, to see the haunting spirit faces of

Kyuquot (Ky-you-kit) Sound, and experience the wonders of the Queen Charlotte Strait.

Rugged, pristine and frequently shrouded in mist, the Queen Charlottes consist of two main islands and many smaller ones approximately 100 miles off the northwest coast of B.C. Their distance from the mainland, coupled with their raw wilderness appeal, has earned them such

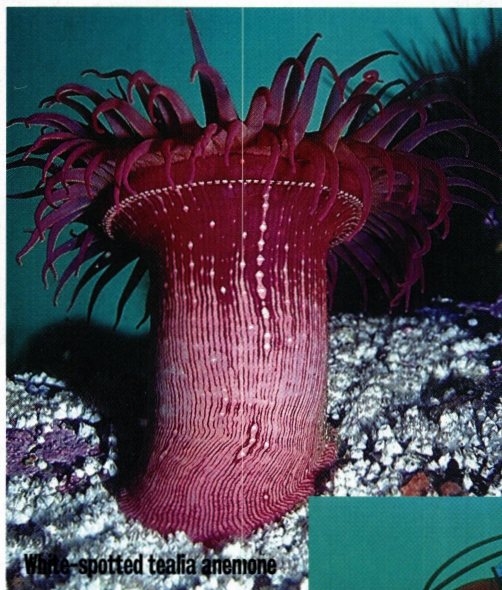
fanciful nicknames as Misty Isles and the Canadian Galapagos. The Japanese Current sweeps warm, blue water into the inlets and secluded lagoons. Blue sharks are common and rare sightings of soupfin sharks, mola mola (ocean sunfish), elephant seals and even giant sea turtles have been reported.

Tucked into a tiny secluded bay on the eastern side of Anthony Island lies what is arguably the Queen Charlotte's most popular tourist attraction—the world's largest stand of Haida totem poles. Still in their original position, weathered and bleached by time, these skillfully carved mortuary and memorial totems are the decaying sentinels of a nearly lost civilization. Engraved on the poles are family emblems and the images of land and sea animals—creatures and myths

carved in cedar more than a century ago. Ninestints, the best preserved of all the old Haida village sites, was added to UNESCO's prestigious list of World Heritage Sites in November 1981.

Much of the Queen Charlotte's undersea terrain has not yet been fully explored. Lack of access and the absence of recreational diving facilities have left these waters to marine researchers or commercial

harvesters of abalone. Several Vancouver Island-based live-aboard dive operators now feature the Queen Charlotte archipelago as a special adventure destination in their summer itineraries. Most of the diving is conducted in Hecate Strait along the Charlotte's gradually shoaling eastern shoreline.



White-spotted tealia anemone



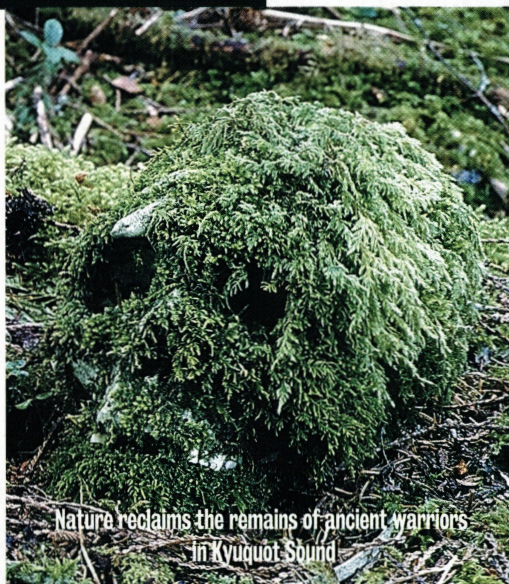
The fish-eating anemone and its moveable feast





A school of black rockfish circle a seamount at Bischof Island

*Marine researchers estimate there are 74 bat stars per square foot in Burnaby Narrows, compared to three per square foot along the west coast of Vancouver Island*



Nature reclaims the remains of ancient warriors in Kyuquot Sound

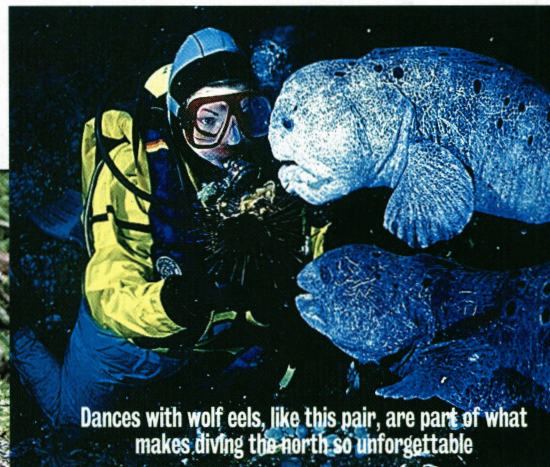
Another notable diving attraction is Burnaby Narrows, a 150-foot wide intertidal channel that separates Moresby Island and Burnaby Island. Burnaby Narrows's vibrant seascape is littered with hundreds of multicolored bat stars. Marine researchers estimate there are 74 bat stars per square foot in Burnaby Narrows, compared to three per square foot along the west coast of Vancouver Island.

But my favorite misty isle site is a craggy ocean pinnacle in the serene Bischof Island group, just south of Lyell Island. A dense canopy of California kelp marks the location. Sea blubbers, huge bell-shaped jellyfish up to 20 inches in diameter, drift aimlessly in the water column trailing their six-foot-long stinging tentacles. Fish are everywhere. The prehistoric-looking Puget Sound king crab drags its tank-like carapace over prickly red sea urchins. As far as the eye can see, a rainbow of starfish, sea anemones and nudibranchs carpet the rocky substrate.

#### Kyuquot Sound

On Kyuquot Sound, you are in one of the most remote diving areas on Vancouver Island's exposed west coast. Places named Battle Bay and Skirmish Islets betray a past

of bloody intertribal warfare, raiding each other's villages and taking slaves. Legend has it that these moss-covered skulls are all that remains of the members of an enemy war party that raided a nearby Nuu-chah-nulth Indian settlement. Three of the attackers were captured and beheaded by warriors from the village. The corpses were left to rot in the open as a grim warning to others. Today the skeletal remains sport a thick growth of moss. The encampment has long since been abandoned and reclaimed by the forest. All that remains is a decaying totem pole and depressions in the earth where longhouses once stood. Today they are only myths to be recounted by divers in front of a roaring campfire. Lush kelp forests, off-shore reefs and surge-chiseled pinnacles combine to form some truly



Dances with wolf eels, like this pair, are part of what makes diving the north so unforgettable

unique seascapes. Typical of the dive sites here is McKeil Rock, a pinnacle rising to within 30 feet of the surface. Strong swells swirling over the peak make for an interesting passage, but, tucked into one of the trenches cutting across the seamount's crest, it is manageable—although the surge is still strong, even at 70 feet.

McKeil Rock's face is gloriously ornamented with a quilt of feathery ostrich plume hydroids, spiral bryozoan, patches of vivid purple hydrocorals, and encrusting colonies of orange gelatin-like sea squirts. Woven into this multicolored fabric are scattered clumps of sponges and several different species of anemones, including giant green anemones, gold-mouthed tealias, crimson anemones and opalescent nudibranchs. The gully is patrolled by large yelloweye rockfish.

Six miles offshore, at the outward reaches of Kyuquot Sound, lie the storm-ravaged Barrier Islets, a treacherous labyrinth of bleak low-lying islands and uncharted shoals that ribbon the coast for about 40 miles. Seabirds such as tufted puffins, storm petrels, black oyster catchers and pelagic cormorants nest on these desolate rocks. Sea otters, once extinct in British Columbia, appear to be making a comeback here and are now seen with regularity.

Undersea encounters with stellar sea lions are virtually guaranteed at a popular site called Sea Lion Rocks. They are the largest of the eared seals—females average seven feet in length and weigh up to 1,000 pounds, bulls average ten feet and weigh in at about 2,000 pounds. But don't let their size



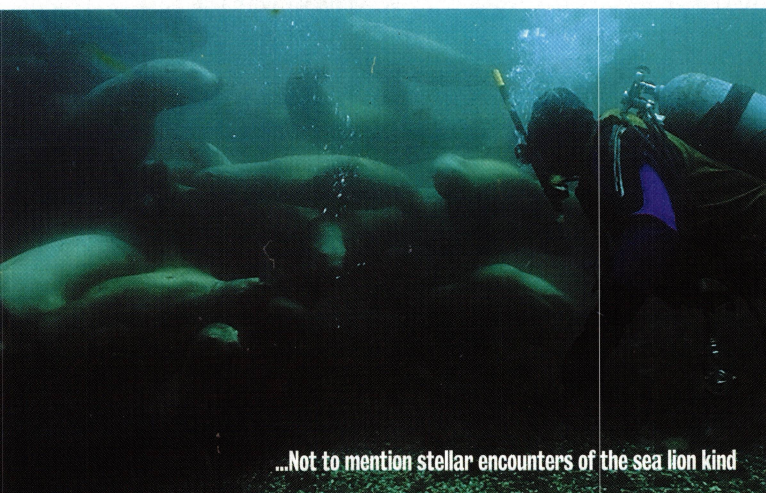
fool you, there is no more graceful aquatic creature anywhere. An underwater meeting with these submarine ballerinas is not to be missed, nor soon forgotten.

Lost in time and worlds away from the crush of civilization, Kyuquot Sound offers an authentic wilderness diving experience. So far removed from the crowd, it is likely to remain that way for a long time to come.

#### Queen Charlotte Strait

Long a treasured destination of local divers, the list of renowned ocean luminaries who have dived here reads like a Who's Who of diving: Stan Waterman, Bob Talbot, Al Giddings, David Doubilet, Chris Newbert, Paul Humann, Ron and Valerie Taylor, the late Jack McKenny, and yes, even the grand guppy himself, Jacques Yves Cousteau. They have all braved the cold water abyss in order to study or photograph some of the most colorful, exotic and bizarre-looking sea life on the planet.

Queen Charlotte Strait, off the northern tip of Vancouver Island, is an expansive waterway with narrow, constricted passages, fjord-like inlets, large islands and a



...Not to mention stellar encounters of the sea lion kind

jigsaw puzzle of smaller islets. Seasonal upwellings, combined with extreme tidal movement produces an enriched planktonic soup that supports a profusion of marine life—more than 500 species of fish, 500 marine plants and thousands of marine invertebrates. This, in turn, supports a large population of marine mammals and makes it one of the best places in the world to observe them. More than a dozen species are seen here, including stellar sea lions, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall porpoises, minke whales, gray whales, humpback whales and a resident pod of more than 100 orcas.

The water is surprisingly clear and in the halcyon days of summer and fall the Queen Charlotte Strait takes on the aspect of a placid mill pond, but the weather can turn nasty very quickly. Fortunately, even then it is possible to tuck into a sheltered area somewhere and enjoy a full day of diving. That's why it's always a wise decision to dive with one of the established live-aboard dive charters or dedicated shore-based operations who are familiar with the area. Many of the region's most celebrated dive sites are widely scattered—miles away from the small town of Port Hardy.

Some of the most spectacular sites are found in areas of

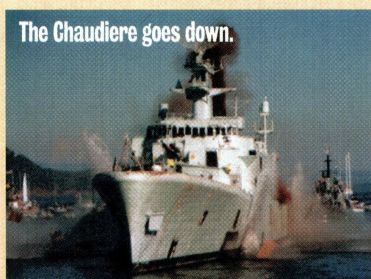
## The Making of a Ghost Fleet

### B.C.'s underwater navy kick-starts Canada's dive industry

THE SCUTTLING OF HMCS CHAUDIERE IN SECHelt INLET IN 1992 was not a raging success. In the last moments before it went crashing to the seabed, the destroyer-escort listed heavily to port and its forward guns keeled over. In coming to rest on its beam ends, *Chaudiere* went from the dream of being a novice divers' playground to the domain of experienced technical divers. But as an experiment in kick-starting a dive travel industry, *Chaudiere's* demise was more of a success than anyone imagined.

"No one would have guessed it would be so successful,"

says Tex Enemark, a local diver and director of the Artificial Reef Society of B.C. (ARSBC), which organized the event. The sinking of the *Chaudiere*, and of the *G.B. Church*, a munitions freighter near Sidney in 1990, cata-



The Chaudiere goes down.

Courtesy of ARSBC

pulted a small but dedicated group of divers and tourism promoters into what has become one of the most ambitious artificial reef projects in North America. Last September the society sank HMCS *Mackenzie*, a sister to the *Chaudiere*, near Sidney. The *Mackenzie* went down on an even keel and immediately became a popular dive destination. By the end of 1998, ARS BC expects to place 10 ships in diveable waters in B.C.'s inland sea, the Strait of Georgia. "By the time we're finished," quips ARSBC president Jay Straith, "we'll have a larger navy underwater, on the west coast, than the government has afloat."

Like early projects on the east coast of the U.S., ARSBC wanted to create new marine habitats and encourage biodiversity. The *G.B. Church* is now home to more than 125 marine species. Recent surveys of the *Chaudiere* have turned up more than 70 species.

Winning over local environmentalists has not been easy, but rigorous inspections and pro-active work by the society has ensured that all the ships sunk so far have exceeded ocean-dumping standards. Tanks are flushed and filled with sea water, bilges are swabbed dry and even wiring is stripped out.

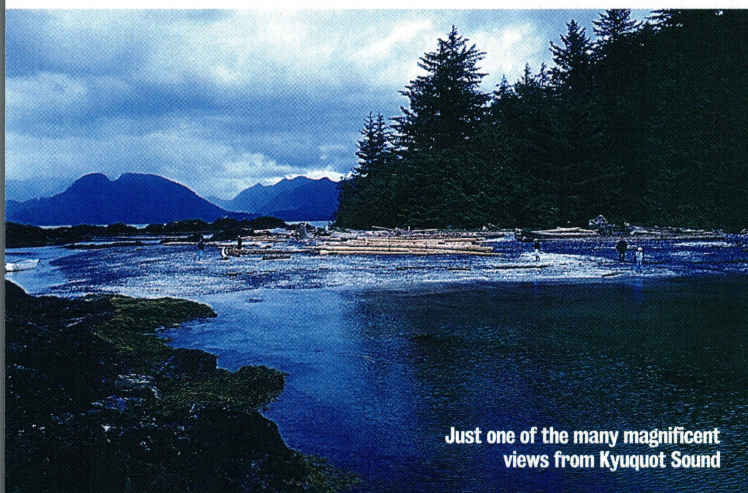
"Environment Canada has made us set a very high standard, and no one would tolerate pollution coming from these ships," says Enemark.

Even bare bones, B.C.'s artificial reefs promise plenty of excitement. "Divers won't get bored diving different ships, even if they are similar in size and shape," says Enemark. "These are great training dive locations for people of all levels. To dive the *Chaudiere* is entirely different from the *Mackenzie*, the marine life is different, as is the type of dive.

For more information, contact B.C. Tourism Ministry, (800) 663-6000.

—Jeff Lee





Just one of the many magnificent views from Kyuquot Sound

swift to moderate tidal movement. Most of these sites can only be explored during slack tide, after the powerful water movement slows to a dead calm. This brief window lasts anywhere from a few minutes to over an hour. Predicting these slack periods is not an exact science, therefore divers must be at the dive site, in their gear, and ready to go as soon as the sea conditions permit. Most dive operators use a pick-up boat to pluck divers from the water—aside from making life easy, this is an added safety measure should the current rear its ugly head and unexpectedly pull you away from the dive site.

Browning Passage's precipitous drop-offs, delirious ledges and rainbow reef tops are decorated with massive nuggets of mustard-yellow sulfur sponge, bushy bouquets of pastel pink soft corals and several varieties of anemones. Neon-veined candy-striped shrimp seek shelter beneath the tentacled umbrella of crimson anemones. Feathery hydroids, deep purple hydrocorals, lacy basketstars, orange-lipped rock scallops and billowy white plumose anemones jam every cranny. Schools of widow rockfish fill the water column while kelp greenlings and the beautifully mottled red Irish lord sculpin perch on sponge outcroppings. Most species of west coast rockfish are found here, as well as lingcod, grunt sculpins and timid decorated warbonnets.

Thrilling interactions with wolf eels are virtually

*Some of the most spectacular sites are found in areas of swift to moderate tidal movement. Most of these sites can only be explored during slack tide, after the powerful water movement slows to a dead calm.*

*Continued on page 114*

## B.C. Basics

**Getting There:** Direct flights from many U.S. cities. If you're driving, B.C. ferries offer service to Vancouver Island and other outlying communities.

**Entry Requirements:** Proof of citizenship (passport or birth certificate).

**Exchange Rate:** Remember, even though it doesn't seem like it, B.C. is a foreign country. At present, the exchange rate gives your bucks extra juice by a third. \$1U.S.=1.35 Canadian. Total deal.

**Climate:** Coastal regions generally have warm summers extending into late October, followed by mild, damp winters. Water temperature runs 40–48°F in winter to the low 50s in summer. Underwater visibility: 40–50 feet, but often exceeds 100 feet between September and May, when plankton blooms are minimal.

**Dive Operators:** Year-round diving is available with the many diving lodges, shops and live-aboard vessels. Rates vary depending on services, but the average for a day's diving—including accommodations, meals, two boat dives, tanks and weightbelt—is \$85–120 US. A good 1/4-inch wetsuit or drysuit with hood, boots and gloves is required, summer or winter. The live-aboard season for the Queen Charlotte Islands is August to September. Kyuquot Sound is July to August, and the Queen Charlotte Strait/Port Hardy region is March to December (year-round for some shore-based dive resorts).

For more information on diving in the Queen Charlotte Islands, Kyuquot Sound, or the Queen Charlotte Strait/Port Hardy region, contact any of these operators: **Exta-Sea Charters Ltd.:** Phone: (604) 756-0544; fax: (604) 758-4897. Live-aboard specializing in 2- to 10-day packages. Queen Charlotte Strait and Kyuquot Sound, and other locations.

**Clavella Adventures:** Phone: (604) 753-3751; fax: (604) 755-4014. Live-aboard, group or individual packages, 1-10 days. Port Hardy/Queen Charlotte Strait, Kyuquot Sound, Queen Charlotte Islands, and other BC locations.

**Lady Goodiver Charters:** Phone: (604) 931-6584; Cell: (604) 220-7187. Live-aboard for 10 to 12 guests. Queen Charlotte Strait and many other BC locations.

**Pacific Spirit Charters:** Phone: (604) 723-1291.

Liveaboard serving Port Hardy, Barkley Sound and west coast of Vancouver Island.

**Emerald Sea Charters:** Phone: (604) 271-DIVE.

Liveaboard dive charters serving the gulf islands.

**Abyssal Diving Charters and Lodge:** Phone: (800) 499-ABYS. Land-based resort serving Quadra Island.

**Pacific Northwest Diving Adventures:** Phone: (604) 935-6711. Land-based resort serving Cortes Island and the Campbell River area.

**God's Pocket Resort:** Phone: (604) 949-9221. A remote, first-class, land-based resort serving the Port Hardy/Queen Charlotte Strait region.

**Seymour Island Lodge:** Phone: (604) 978-9050. Land-based resort serving Seymour Island, Slingsby Channel and Nakwakto rapids.



# Fiji Islands

## Underwater Heaven



### Savu Savu

**Kontiki Resort:** Experience life on a plantation, where your soul will be enriched by beauty and peace, where the diving on the barrier reef is among the finest in the world. 150 acres on the edge of a beautiful lagoon, flanked by two leafy islands and our own marina on the edge of a sandy beach. An excellent choice for the dedicated diver who can bring his family for a total holiday. How to reach Kontiki: **011-679-850262, Fax: 011-679-850355.**

### Taveuni

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**A male rushes into the core**

**group of top females in a courtship display,**

**announcing his readiness to mate.**

**While executing a tail-beat maneuver, he reveals**



*Why does this large predator congregate in schools? How do they find their way in open ocean? Just a few of the questions that arise in the fascinating world of...*

# Hammerheads

by Natasha Fraley

Photos by Amos Nachoum

Looking for a close encounter of the predatory kind? Then these are the words to live by: "Just stay quietly, hold your breath or breathe very slowly, and the hammerheads will not be scared. They'll swim right by you." This is the advice of Amos Nachoum, who has photographed the scalloped hammerheads extensively, and led others to dive with them. While it may seem unlikely that a top predator would fear human contact, in fact, hammerheads often disappear when divers enter the water. But, says Nachoum, "if you just try to blend in with the rocks you will have a close encounter with a passing school of scalloped hammerheads that fills your entire vision. It's something you'll remember for the rest of your life."

Did he say schooling sharks?

The scalloped hammerheads, with their wing-like heads, swim by like a squadron of airplanes. Why would a large predator school? Animals often form aggregations for protection or feeding, or for social reasons. The hammerheads certainly don't need protection—they are after all at the top of the food chain. And feeding has never been seen in these daytime schools. However, research has shown that one reason for the schools is that they are the basis for the social system of the scalloped hammerheads.

Males and females of different ages and sizes make up the schools. While mature males reach a size of a little over five feet, females grow to about seven feet. The sex ratio of these schools is very skewed: six females to every

white belly to a smaller female who flees. Sometimes a fight may ensue with females engaging in jaw bashing.

It is thought that the center of the school is the desirable spot for one reason: it is here that a mature male will come to find a mate. A male rushes into this core group of top females in a courtship display, announcing his readiness to mate. While executing a tail-beat maneuver, he reveals his clasper, the sexual organ—a splendid show of sharkish studliness. What happens next is not clear, but if a female chooses him, the two separate from the school and disappear, presumably to mate in a more private setting.

The scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*), one of nine species of hammerhead sharks, is found in all warm temperate oceans, near coasts and islands. All the hammerheads are viviparous, giving birth to live young. The embryos are at first nourished and take oxygen from a yolk-sac, which later transforms to a placenta attached to the mother's uterus. Each of the babies—from 15 to 30 in a litter—is snug in its own compartment, with its own umbilicus and placenta. The entire litter taken together may weigh one-third the weight of the female.

Pupping occurs in shallow waters after a long period—possibly as much as seven months. At a known pupping ground around Oahu, hammerhead pups gather in groups in murky water by day (there is definitely safety in numbers when you're small),

and make short foraging trips by night.

Eventually

they move to join the schools in deeper water.

But not just

his clasper, the sexual organ—

a splendid show of

sharkish studliness.

male. The largest, mature females occupy the center of the school. But it is not easy to keep this position. A female maintains her place in the pecking order through threats. In one dominance display, females perform a reverse somersault while spinning and flashing a





any deep water. First fishermen and then divers discovered that the scalloped hammerhead schools are found around volcanic sea mounts and islands. The schools swim around these pinnacles by day and at dusk separate to feed in deeper water. These nocturnal excursions are to feeding grounds as far away as 10 to 15 miles, to feast primarily on squid, but also on fish. At dawn, individuals return to join the school near the sea mount.

But why sea mounts? And how do the sharks find their way home? The sharks seem to use the sea mounts as navigation centers based on the magnetic fields on the ocean bottom. The sea floor has lines of magnetism, as well as valleys and ridges of differing magnetic intensities. So, just as we can follow the topography of a place, it is theorized that the scalloped hammerheads follow the magnetic topography. Tagged animals followed electromagnetic "corridors" to and from sea mounts in the Sea of Cortez, swimming in the midwater, far from either the surface or bottom. Not much is known about how animals sense magnetic fields, but it has been theorized as a means of navigation for sea turtles, salmon and many other ocean travelers.

Researchers have established that sharks have the keenest electric sense known to science, using special receptors on their heads called the ampullae of Lorenzini. Perhaps, as the sharks swim over the bottom, they sense the difference in the electromagnetic fields and use these differences to follow the course home. With their broad wing-like heads, the electrical receptors are widely

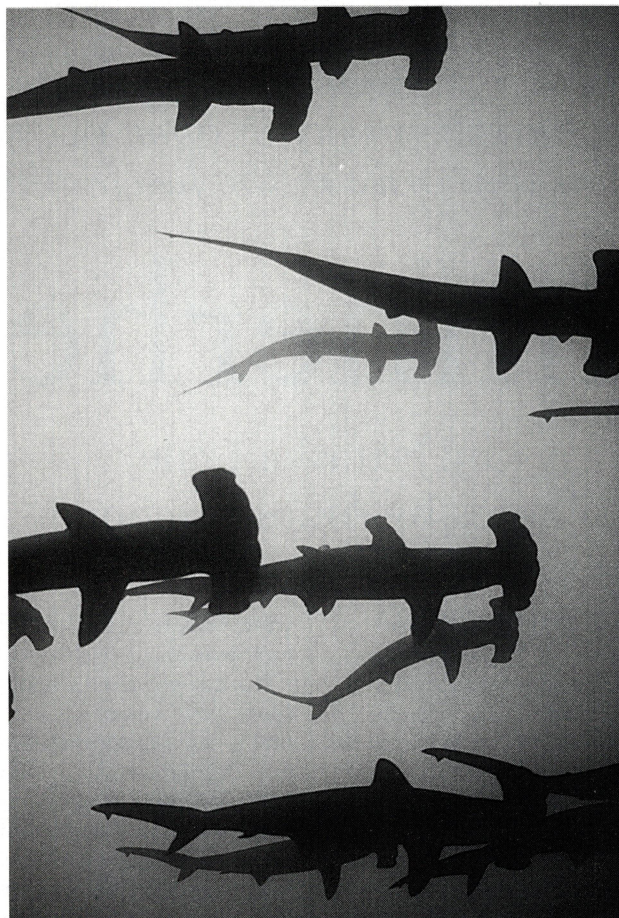
**The head is narrow  
and flat,**

spaced, perhaps making it easier to compare the electromagnetic fields, like using a metal detector.

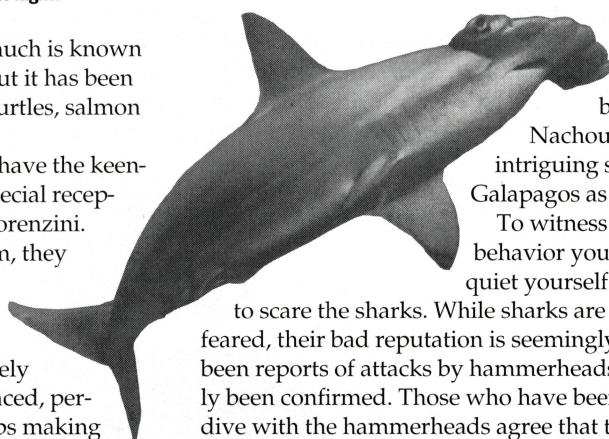
The shark's olfactory and pressure receptors, along with

**slicing through the water**

**like the wing of a plane, without much resistance. This**



**The thrill of diving with hammerheads—huge squadrons that number in the hundreds swarm around seamounts by day and move off to hunt the open waters at night.**



to scare the sharks. While sharks are almost universally feared, their bad reputation is seemingly unjust. There have been reports of attacks by hammerheads, but none has really been confirmed. Those who have been lucky enough to dive with the hammerheads agree that they appear to be shy of humans. We are the aliens in their world.

In fact, humans are much more of a threat to sharks than the other way around. Fishing can have a large impact on shark numbers, since they are slow to mature and give birth to only a few young. Biologists know almost nothing about most shark populations. While there has been

the electrical receptors, are also widely spaced, increasing their sensitivity. And perhaps strangest of all to us, the eyes sit way out on the tips of the winged head, giving the sharks extremely good binocular vision. If you watch a swimming hammerhead carefully, you will see that, in fact, the head is narrow and flat, slicing through the water like the wing of a plane, without much resistance. This probably helps in maneuverability in catching very swift prey, like squid.

Although the thrill of diving with hammerheads is seeing a squadron of hundreds, there are other thrills to be had if you wait, and watch. While diving near Cocos Island, Nachoum recounts seeing unexpected encounters between hammerheads and small fish. A lone shark will suddenly appear and come very close to the reef. Several small angelfish dart out of the reef and begin to pick at the waiting hammerhead—it's a cleaning station!

Another hammerhead will follow, taking its turn to be rid of parasites.

Nachoum has observed this intriguing scene in the Galapagos as well as near Cocos.


To witness this quiet, intimate behavior you must be still and quiet yourself. It's important not



an increase in shark fishing worldwide, there are few catch records. Sharks, like sea turtles and dolphins, are often the victims of nets and hooks intended for other species.

There are reports of extensive hammerhead fishing for their fins (for shark fin soup) in the Sea of Cortez and the Galapagos. The Ecuadoran government has issued permits to use gill nets in the Galapagos Sanctuary, and the hammerheads especially are being targeted for fins. Although there is a zone of protection around Cocos Island in Costa Rica, outside of that region there is unrestrained fishing for sharks.

Additionally, there is a concern about the shark cartilage business in Costa Rica and elsewhere. In the Sea of Cortez, gill netting has almost decimated the famous hammerhead schools that used to circle Isla Las Animas and El Bajo sea mounts—the sites of most of the research on the scalloped hammerheads.

Diving with hammerheads is a privilege. Being in the middle of a school of these enigmatic creatures is “enthraling and mesmerizing,” says Nachoum. Knowledge and appreciation will certainly help protect the sharks. Without our education and protection, however, there will be no more shark-infested waters. 



Excellent binocular vision and a head perfectly designed to slice through the water, but all their marvelous adaptations will not protect them from their greatest enemy: humans.



probably helps in catching very swift prey, like squid.

# 5 places to see Hammerheads

**H**ammerheads are found in most warm temperate and tropical seas, but that doesn't mean you can expect to see them everywhere. Your best bet is a trip to one of the well-known places where they are known to congregate in large schools.

The best places are in the eastern Pacific, which is nice because it's fairly close. The first three on this list are generally considered the center of the hammerhead universe and sightings are quite dependable.

## 1 Malpelo

The nice thing about Malpelo is the sharks can usually be found right at the surface. If you're lucky, you can slip into the water on snorkel and swim around with them for a while before they slowly begin to spiral downward. At that point, don your regulator and descend with them.

## 2 The Northern Galapagos

Around Darwin and Wolf islands, in the northern group, the situation is similar to Malpelo. Hammerheads are a relatively shy creature, however, and they may flee from the disturbance made by boats and divers entering the water. Never fear. Tuck into one of the rocky crevices part way down the slope and breath quietly. In a few minutes they will begin to appear on the edge of the blue. Before long, you'll have a ringside seat at the grand parade.

## 3 Cocos Island

Cocos is also well known for its enormous schools of hammerheads. Here the sharks are usually found a little deeper, between 60 and 100 feet. Once again, hunker down, make yourself inconspicuous and wait for the sharks.

## 4 Socorro Island

Sightings at Socorro are not as dependable as they are at the top three destinations, but they are still a better-than-even bet and hey, even if you don't see any hammerheads, you'll still see more than enough mantas to make the trip worthwhile.

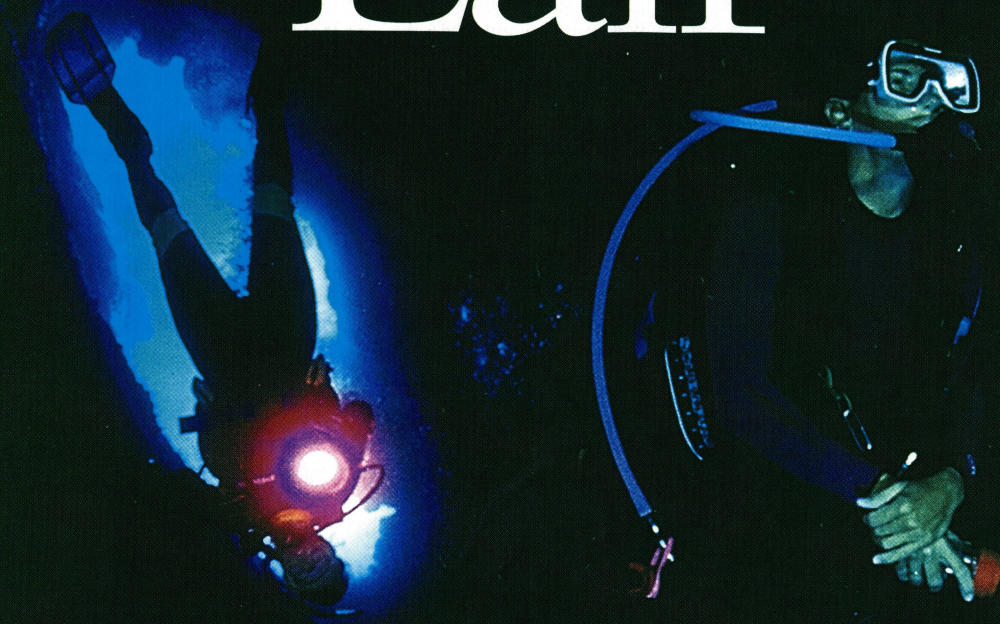
## 5 Sea of Cortez

Time was the Sea of Cortez was legendary for its hammerheads. Sadly, today sightings are more hit and miss. The problem is overfishing. However, there are still a few well-known seamounts that are fairly dependable. A knowledgeable, experienced guide is essential here.





# The Lessons of Lusca's Lair



by Vallorie Hodges



*If you think the family islands  
are all wall dives and sharks,  
consider the subtle mysteries  
of the blue Bahamian  
concavities...*



Deep

beneath the emerald water and colorful reefs of the Bahamas dwells a monster. In a labyrinth of caves, caverns and tunnels, the beast moves, unseen by human eyes.

But if you watch, you can see him breathing.

At the lair's entrance is a magnificent hole, encircled by lovely coral. As the creature inhales, you can see the water swirl in a vortex, drawing into its mouth and down the shaft. So big is this beast it takes six hours for one breath. When he exhales, the hole boils like a cauldron, current spewing from the entrance and out to the sea. Beware the legendary Lusca—half shark, half octopus—guardian of the Bahamian blue holes.

Compared to the mythical Lusca, the scientific description of blue holes is somewhat benign, though this hasn't discouraged a growing interest in the holes by divers. So what are these blue holes, and why are we diving them? Blue holes are the product of thousands of years of geological and chemical changes within the earth's crust, resulting in underwater caves [see sidebar, "Holistic History"]. The holes themselves are formed by a collapse of cavern ceilings, exposing the subterranean vaults. Diving these holes can be extraordinary.

21 February 1996

Off the southeastern end of Andros lies the lost city of Atlantis. The entrance is adorned with a semicircular rim of coral that breaches the surface at low tide. We swim into the arms of the coral that has thrived as a result of the nutrient-rich waters pumping in and out of the hole with each tidal swing. A chasm opens up beneath us, and deep vivid blue fades to black. Suddenly from the depths, streaks of silver emerge. Like a herd of wild horses galloping from a blind canyon, a school of horse-eye jacks pours out of the hole and speeds past. As we free fall into the vertical shaft, streams of light reflect off the encrusted walls. Into the depths we descend, the cavern walls flaring into a large amphitheater. From a rubble pile at 100 feet the cavern leads off in several directions, angling downward into the darkness. Claimed by the insurgent current, the remains of a small sloop can be found amid the rubble. Looking up, a startling frame of blue glows in the clear Bahamian water. Like guardians of the secret maze that must surely lead to the city of



*Atlantis, Rob and Stephie play gatekeepers at the edge of darkness, lest one of us stray beyond the realms of the light zone.*

Quite simply, a blue hole is an entrance to an underwater cave. Yet there is really nothing simple about them. From a modest entrance, these holes frequently lead to complex cave systems, which can span thousands of feet laterally and often several hundred feet of depth. This brings us to the paradox of the holes: the incredible opportunity they offer the underwater explorer and the serious level of risk they present to those not properly trained and equipped. In historical terms another paradox exists: the potential wealth of geological and archeological information we can gain from the holes, and the risk of destroying these valuable resources through ignorance and abuse. So how do we balance the risks and the opportunity?

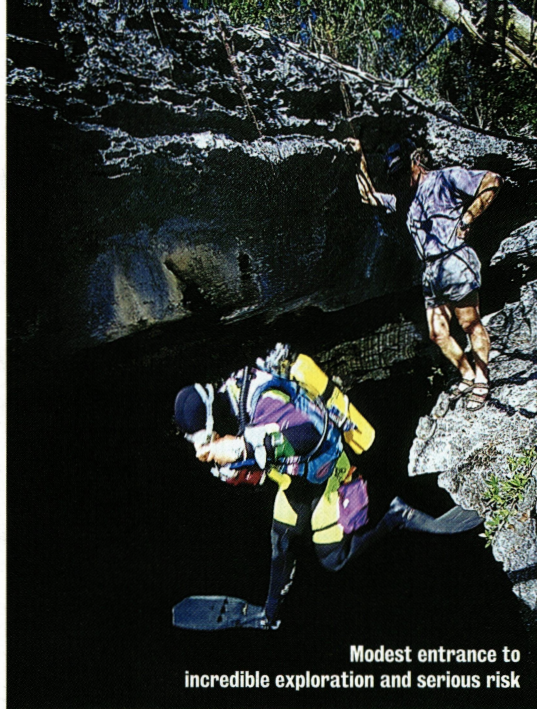
Fortunately, our guide for this trip is the world's foremost blue hole expert, Rob Palmer. Diving these holes since 1981, he has explored and mapped a significant portion of the holes, adding to the earlier work of Dr. George Benjamin, one of cave

diving's great pioneers. Palmer and his wife, Stephie Schwabe, are directors of the Blue Holes Foundation, dedicated to the preservation and exploration of the blue holes of the Bahamas. With their guidance, we would learn a tremendous amount about the holes and how to dive them safely [see sidebar "Avoiding Square Peg Syndrome"]. This is also an expedition, with the opportunity to be involved in the excitement of discovering and exploring holes that have never been dived before.

Adding to the enjoyment of this

excursion is the dive vessel itself. The luxurious MV *Ballymena* is working with the Blue Holes Foundation to provide regular blue-holes expeditions for divers. This beautiful 124-foot yacht features all the creature comforts. Ten spacious staterooms, each with private bath, are fully equipped with TV, video and CD players. The custom designed dive room is loaded with state-of-the-art equipment, and two dive tenders provide flexibility in organizing activities. Snorkeling, ocean kayaking, windsurfing, fishing and out-island exploration are all available. From the elegant main salon to the com-

fortable sun deck, this vessel is an absolute delight. If the gourmet meals, fine wines, and snacks don't satisfy your appetite, just ask for the famous *Ballymena Bon Bons*—a taste sensation! From her home base on Paradise Island, the *Ballymena* is conveniently close to the birthplace of blue hole diving, Andros Island. Holes are spread throughout the Bahamas, from the Lucayan Caverns on Great Bahama in the north, to lesser known but promising areas of the Acklins in the south. This trip, however, will focus on several partic-



**Modest entrance to  
incredible exploration and serious risk**

Amos Nachoum



**"High to low, suck to blow,"  
a useful aphorism any time, but  
especially valuable in the special  
environment of the Bahama's blue holes**

Amos Nachoum





Sloan Westerland

ularly dramatic sites off Andros.

After a shakedown dive at the Crater, discovered by Small Hope Bay Lodge in the mid 1980s, we continue south along the eastern shore of Andros. The Crater's overhangs, ledges and vertical structures whet our appetite for exploring. When our next dive offers a choice between the known and the unknown, we choose to take a leap. A short distance up Middle Bight we find the blue hole as marked on the chart. Will it be the adventure-of-a-lifetime blue hole, or will it be blah hole? It doesn't take long to discover this hole is low on the adventure scale. The distinctly green water is turbid, becoming dark with depth, but it is the cold that drives us back to the surface. One diver records 59°! Call this one Blue Lips Hole.

During the next several days we visit a number of holes, including the Vortex, Benjamin's Blue Holes, Lusca's Breath and Atlantis. Several of these offer an eye-opening demonstration of one of the risks of diving marine holes. The resurgence and resurgence of current from these holes can be colossal. This water movement is caused mainly by tidal flow, thus the phrase "high to low, suck to blow." It is easy to get caught with a quick change, and there is often a lag between what is happening on the beach and what is happening in these cave systems. To further complicate things, storm events can change the "normal" cycle. This emphasizes the need for a knowledgeable guide.

**Above: Grunts swirling in the Bahamian blue; Right: Rob Palmer briefs the divers on the etiquette of Lusca's lair**



Amos Nachbaur

## Holistic History

The formation of the Bahamian blue holes is a lesson in both geology and chemistry. The Bahamas are entirely limestone, a highly porous rock susceptible to the erosive qualities of salt- and freshwater. Freshwater percolating down through this rock collected in a "fresh water lens." The chemical mix of fresh- and saltwater, combined with tidal flow, created the ideal environment for the further breakdown of rock, resulting in large voids filled with water. During repeated ice ages, the surface of the ocean dropped dramatically, and these voids were left high and dry. Without the support of water, gravity helped many of the cave ceilings collapse to the surface. Freshwater draining through the caves formed stalagmites and stalactites. Additionally, great fractures formed along the length of these islands near the banks. At the end of the ice ages water levels rose, flooding the caverns. Where the ceilings had collapsed through to the surface, the holes were formed.

Motoring back to the Ballymena from Atlantis, we nearly trip over three blue holes blowing their exhaling current into the clear Bahamian seas. Throwing on our snorkeling gear, we are all eager to take part in this first level of exploring these holes. The first is the largest, with an opening some 20 feet wide, leading into the darkness. As we approach, four Caribbean reef sharks swim out

of the opening. Two zip off over the reef, while the other two retreat inside the dark opening. The second hole, a short distance away, is smaller with more current. The third seems to be little more than three small openings in the sand in the formation of a three-leafed clover. As we exit the water there is a restrained buzz of excitement and curiosity. It is decided to return the following day with scuba units to survey the first, and what appears to be the largest, of our finds.

22 February 1996

*As we motor over to Four Shark Hole and drop into the water, a large ray moves lazily from a sandy resting place in front of the hole. The entrance juts in from the side like a lopsided smile, and with a rush of excited anticipation we peer into the dark hole. The hole is insurging, and though not terribly strong, it is a bit disconcerting to be drawn into the darkness by the current. Entering slowly and carefully to avoid disturbing the silt floor, our eyes adjust to the dim light streaming in behind us. Suddenly the strength of the insurgence drops off, and from the modest foyer, the cavern walls flare dramatically into a grand ballroom with nearly square sides. The*





Some of the spooky decor in Lusca's Lair

Amos Nachoum

far wall cannot be seen. This is much larger than we anticipated, and we nod at each other in appreciation of our find. Palmer later describes it as the largest entry passage he's found yet. Staying within the sun's glowing light, we move gently around the walls exploring. Paying close attention to the cavern diving "rule of thirds" for our air (one third in, one third out, one third in reserve), we realize we will need a bit to make our way back out the throat of the dragon and into the sparkling sunlight.

Four Shark Hole will certainly remain a highlight of this trip, but the best has been saved for last. After loading our gear on a local truck, we climb aboard for our inland hole excursion. Destination: Stargate.

23 February 1996

After a short trek through the scrub we stare at the overhanging cavern that drops some 20 feet to the surface of the water. We edge over carefully to have a look at the skydive entry. Beneath the overhang, the coolness is inviting, and it doesn't take long to convince us that the simplest solution to the sticky heat is to take the plunge. Jumping off the overhanging piece of rock to the water below creates a rather exhilarating splash. Despite this excitement, nothing could prepare us for the experience of this dive. Descending beyond 20 feet, the water suddenly becomes hazy and shimmering. No Amos, there's nothing wrong with your camera! This is the halocline—the mixing zone between fresh and salt water. At 60 feet we are engulfed by the warmer salt water, and visibility clears. As we make our way into the North Passage, the immensity of this cavern

hits me like a slap in the face. Looking down through the crystal water, I see the rubble floor far below. The sheer walls on either side are streaked with the evidence of thousands of years of geological change, painting the colors of time in sweeping strokes of amber. On the wall to our left we pause to inspect the smooth golden flow stone. Farther on we find *Lucifuga*, the blind cave fish. As we swim up the passage, dive lights reflect off the white walls with brilliant relief. Perhaps the most stunning moment is turning around, and facing the surreal glow of the entry. Turning our lights against our palms to hide their light, we hover in the depths and stare at the scene. Brilliant shards of light stream down in a luminous green glow. Within the chambers of this enormous subterranean cathedral, we face the powerful magic of nature as a religious experience. As we move through Stargate, Stargate moves us.

While we encountered no sign of the feared Lusca in our voyages, a sense of concern for the well-being of these holes is warranted. Damage by careless divers is not the only issue. Wastewater runoff and the use of inland holes as human refuse receptacles has already destroyed several. Education and encouraging the Bahamian government to declare many of these areas parks and sanctuaries are among the goals of the Blue Holes Foundation. If no guardian monster exists, it is up to us to protect them, or perhaps we are the beast beneath the Bahamas.

For more information see the **Dive Travel Planner on page 105.**

## Avoid the Square Peg Syndrome

One of the beauties of diving these holes is you don't have to be a cave diver to do it. All of the diving for this expedition was classified as cavern diving, which requires the diver to remain within sight of the exit, limit depth to 80 feet and limit penetration to 150 feet. The procedures, equipment and training required for cavern diving are pretty straightforward, but failure to employ them can be deadly. There is an overwhelming need to temper enthusiasm with discretion. As a guide, use a cave-certified instructor familiar with these holes.

Want to go further, deeper and longer? You'll need to be cave certified, which involves additional training, equipment and procedures. But whether cave or cavern diving, employing all the right gear and safety procedures may not be enough in holes so prone to insurgence and resurgence. So how do you avoid being a square peg in a round hole? Use a guide familiar with diving these holes. Check people out, ensure staff are cave trained, and ask to see certification. Try to determine local familiarity—how often they have visited these sites, and under what conditions? Use full cave certification level instructors to train you to be a cavern diver. You should also be taught how to avoid damage to the caves. These caves continue to provide a wealth of information to both geologists and archeologists. Important recoveries of ancient human remains and a ceremonial Lucayan canoe have already occurred here. Abuse and damage could deprive all of us of future opportunity.

For more information on diving Bahamian blue holes and a free safety leaflet, contact the Blue Holes Foundation at (809) 362-2403. Rob Palmer's "Deep Into Blue Holes" is also an excellent source of information. The National Speleological Society's Cave Diving Section (NSS-CDS) can provide you information on certification programs.



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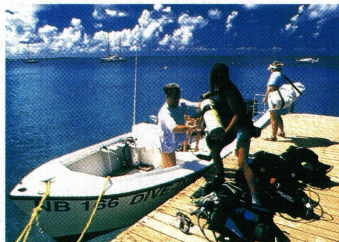
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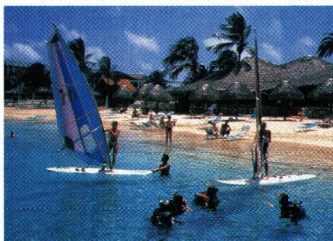


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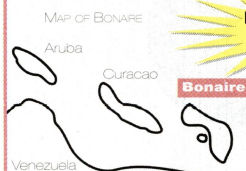
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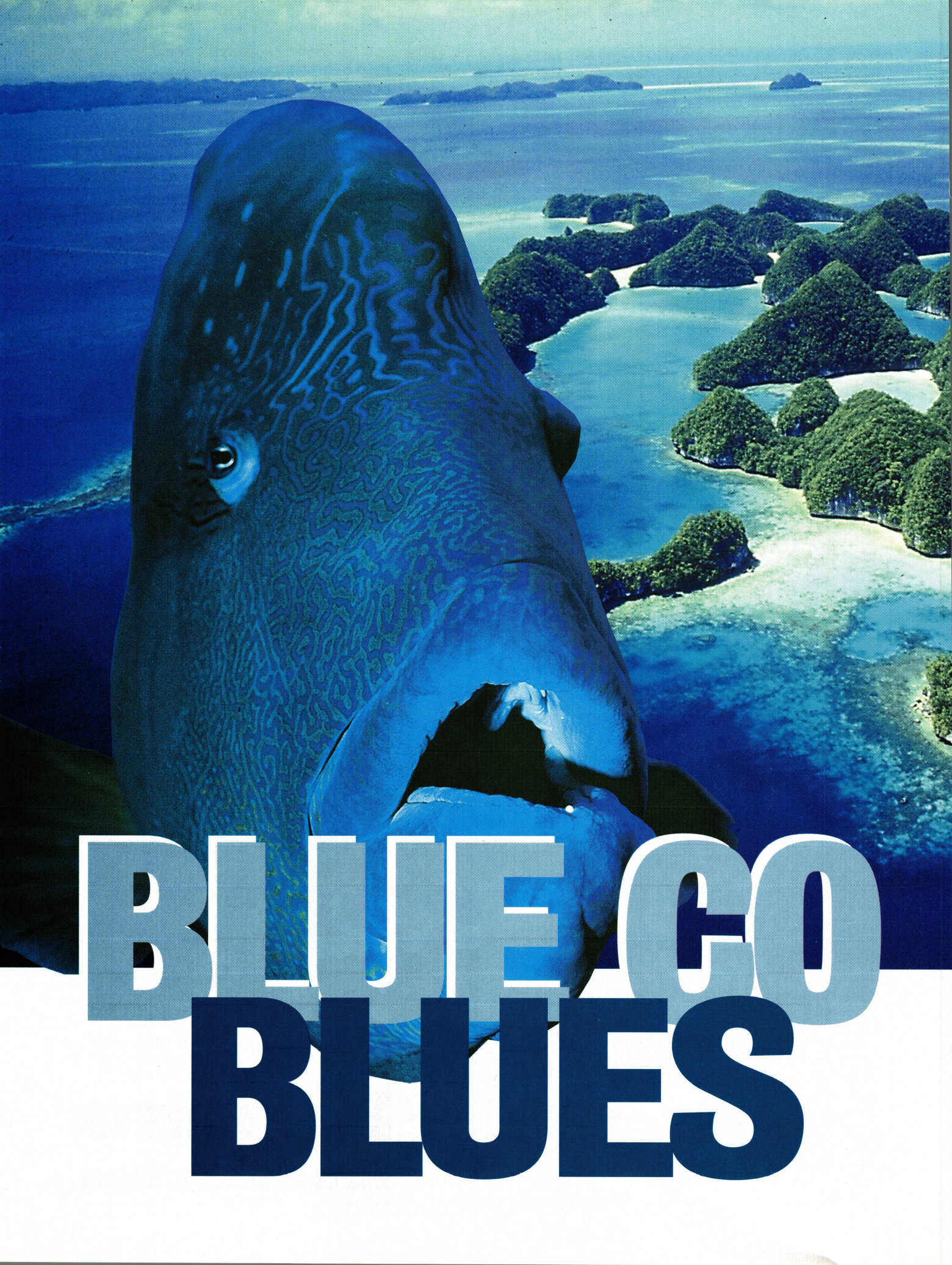
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# BLUE GO BLUES





hung motionless a few feet above the edge of the vertical wall. My short safety line, pulled taught in the relentless current, allowed me to have both hands free to operate my camera. The blunt hook on one end of the line was wedged tightly in a crack in the substrate, the other end was securely fastened to a clip on my buoyancy compensator. In the current, the air bubbles from my regulator exploded in a horizontal stream behind me each time I exhaled. I resembled a large awkward kite on a short tether.

In front of me, sometimes only an arm's length away, several large gray reef sharks hung almost motionless in the current. I wrestled my camera into position for another photo. A huge Napoleon wrasse pulled alongside, eyeing my clumsiness. Above and beyond, a large school of barracuda swam effortlessly in the upper reaches of the water column. Definitely high-voltage, this was diving at its best.

As the divemaster gave the "final, final" thumbs-up sign for the group to begin the ascent, I begrudgingly relinquished my perch. For an exhilarating 45 minutes I had been experiencing the wonders of Blue Corner, one of the most exciting dive sites in the world.

Palau has the well-earned reputation as one of the "Seven Underwater Wonders of the World." Many of my diving buddies, who traveled extensively in the South Pacific ten years ago, raved about the large numbers of sharks and other pelagics, the soft corals and abundance of fishes, and the breathtaking Rock Islands.

It wasn't until three years ago that I first visited Palau. On that occasion, I was amazed at the incredible number of sharks and other pelagics. As spectacular as the diving was on my return to Palau last year, I sensed changes. While Blue Corner was still an awesome dive, it had changed. The large groupers, once found in great numbers, were diminished. The number of sharks seen on any given dive had been reduced noticeably. As with many of the greatest dive

destinations in the world, the quality of Palau's diving is being seriously threatened. Short-term greed and human predation have begun to make a noticeable impact on Palau's underwater natural resources.

#### THE POLITICS OF PARADISE

On the record, the Palauan government sells licenses to foreign fishing enterprises for the rights to harvest only tuna or tuna-like fishes. While economics is typically cited as the motivation for selling fishing rights, the annual license fees in Palau for a single boat are usually

\$3,000 or less. Considering the fact that a single 600-pound bluefin tuna can bring as much as \$90 a pound on the Japanese market, it's easy to see the fishing companies are on the winning end of the deal. Some of the nations that participate most actively with fishing fleets in Oceania waters are China, Japan, Taiwan, Russia and Korea.

Two of Palau's neighbors in Micronesia, Guam and the Marshall Islands, have moved to reduce or eliminate for-

# BLUE CORNER

by Steve Rosenberg

*And other tales  
from Micronesia*



Silent surfers, mantas wing through the azure emptiness of the Micronesian waters



Steve Rosenberg

eign fishing concerns. A third neighboring island, Yap, has not completely excluded foreign long-line fishing boats, but they have only one foreign company with a license to fish. The Yapese government retains ownership of all the facilities, and polices the industry closely.

But in Palau, where the government recently extended foreign fishing permits for another five years, a hotly debated political struggle still rages over foreign fishing rights. On my flight into Palau, I had the opportunity to discuss the fishing problem with one of Palau's 16 elected representatives who happened to be seated next to me (and who requested anonymity). Expressing deep concern with the incursion of foreign fishing boats, this representative's message was that Palau is selling fishing rights much too cheaply in relation to the adverse effects on long-term resources. He pointed out that while there are restrictions, they have not been enforced. The strong implication is that a great deal of money from outside the country is being used to obtain political support for current fishing policy.

The representative acknowledged that the Palauan government is trying to develop long-range plans to preserve resources. Despite the fact that existing agreements preclude the taking of other fishes considered "incidental catch," the reported non-tuna take is consistently above 25 percent. Long-line ships coming into the Koror harbor seem to have high percentages of incidental catch, including sharks, marbled grouper, swordfish, marlin and Napoleon fish. One Palauan dive operator, Sam Scott of Sam's Tours, explained, "They're using hooks with wire leader, and basically any pelagic—billfish, sharks, wahoo, mahi, marlin—will bite. They can only sell the yellowfin, the rest gets shipped off to become catfood."

A walk along the local docks in Koror offers evidence of the demise of great schools of yellowfin tuna. Workers feverishly box these beautiful animals, stacked like cord

wood, into endless piles of containers waiting to be shipped off to neighboring Asian countries.

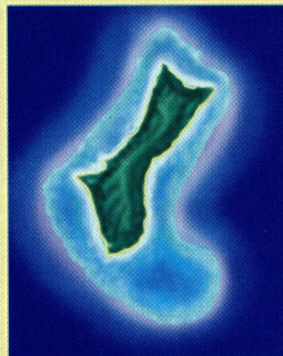
Below water, the number of sleek gray sharks on the outer reefs has declined noticeably even over the last two to three years. Other fish populations are taking a hit as well. "I used to see yellowfin tuna off Blue Corner, and I don't see them now," said Scott, adding that the shark population has also declined. And the evidence is visible; dozens of shark fins hang to dry in plain view on the decks of long-line fishing boats in the Koror harbor. Despite this brazen display, the government seems to have turned a blind eye.

The problem today is that there is too much easy money to be made from the fishing industry. If the Palauan government wants to preserve its tourism industry, it must make the difficult choice and act swiftly to preserve its precious underwater resources. Palau's government has taken some steps over the past few years. Many of the islands have been made marine reserves that are off limits to visitors. Spearfishing, driftnetting and explosives are prohibited at all dive spots. These measures, however, will have little impact on the overall welfare of Palau's future without more carefully thought-out agreements with foreign fishing concerns.

Some Palauan dive operators are spreading the word. "We're telling people about it. We write about it, talk it up, take pictures," said Scott, who feels their efforts have

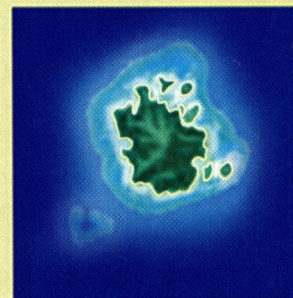
## Some Highlights From The

### Guam



In the Marianas group, this island has a separate political structure. The veritable Big Apple of Micronesia, this 212-square-mile bow-tie isle has a population of 130,000. With traffic, strip malls, a university, golf courses and high-rise package hotels, visitors from the U.S. will feel distinctly at home (not always a plus when you've traveled that far).

### Kosrae



This laidback isle, about nine miles by eight, is one of the least developed regions of Micronesia. From the 2064-foot peak of Mt. Finkel, the land falls in rainforest-draped ridges to the coast which is surrounded by a fringing reef. Both shore and boat diving are available on coral reefs and WWII wrecks. Plentiful waterfalls, a mangrove swamp and ruins from ancient Kosraean civilization are potential day adventures.



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er operator Francis  
ong of Fish 'N' Fins is concen-  
traing his energy on enlisting the  
support of the local population who  
he believes should be instrumental  
in changing Palau's governmental  
policy. An effort is currently under-  
way to get a measure on the ballot  
for the November general election  
allowing the people of Palau to de-  
cide for themselves on the extent of foreign fishing in  
Palauan waters.

What is clear is that the government of Palau can no  
longer sell its future so cheaply. Legislation against fish-  
ing violations and poaching is essential, coupled with  
strict enforcement of existing laws. As visitors to what is  
still one of the great gems of Pacific diving, it's important  
to let the Palauan people know you support their efforts  
to preserve Palau's considerable resources for many gen-

## Here & Now



**To support the dive operators of  
Palau in their efforts to change dam-  
aging foreign fishing practices in  
Palauan waters, write:**

**President Kuniwo Nakamura  
Republic of Palau  
PO Box 100, Koror, Palau 96940**

erations to come. Without all of our  
efforts, Palau could one day be added  
to the growing list of former world-  
class dive destinations.

For the present though, this marine  
jewel continues to be one of those  
special places where beauty and ex-  
citement abound, both above and be-  
low the water.

## THE DIVING

Land-based and live-aboard diving  
in Palau is done from small to medi-  
um-sized dive boats, or chase boats  
equipped with powerful outboard  
motors, capable of speeds in excess of  
35 knots. Part of the excitement and  
adventure of diving here is the high-

speed trips through the stunning Rock Islands.

A two-tank day of diving with a land-based operator out  
of Koror is typically a full-day affair, running from about  
9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. With a minimum two-hour surface in-  
terval between dives, there's plenty of time to picnic on a  
secluded beach, or snorkel before the second dive.

Almost all of the dives are drift dives—drop off the  
boat and let the current do the propulsion. The boat fol-  
lows your bubbles, retrieving you when you surface.

# Federated States of Micronesia

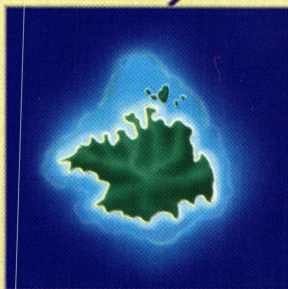
**Made up of 2100 islands scattered across a stretch of the Pacific larg-  
er than the continental U.S., Micronesia has a combined land mass less  
than that of Rhode Island. The boundaries of Micronesia are not hard  
and fast. Historically, the region has included the Marianas, Marshall  
and Caroline Island chains, and sometimes the Gilbert Islands as well.**

## Palau



The world's newest nation (independ-  
ence in 1994) and home to immensely  
rich flora and fauna. Four high islands, a  
low coral atoll, and the more than 200  
photogenically famous Rock Islands  
compose the archipelago. Most of the  
nation's 15,000 inhabitants live on Koror.

## Pohnpei



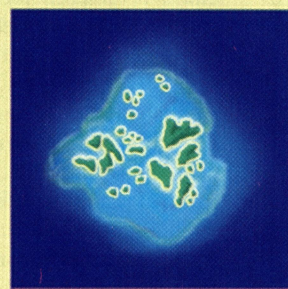
At 129 square miles, Pohnpei  
is the third largest island in  
Micronesia, with eight outly-  
ing atolls. High mountain  
ridges and emerald valleys  
carve the main island's center, while the coast is mainly  
swamps and tidal flats. The  
barrier reef runs between  
one and five miles offshore,  
enclosing a 70-square-mile  
lagoon. Ant and Pakin atolls  
(one and two-and-a-half  
hours away by boat) have  
great diving. On Pohnpei, ask  
about the 1500-pound yams;  
this diet mainstay takes on  
some mysteriously large  
proportions here.

## Yap



Most everyone knows  
about the giant stone mon-  
ey, much of it lined along  
pathways in the island  
"banks." Earliest archeo-  
logical finds in Yap date  
back to 200 AD—rocky  
currency has been around  
awhile. But contemporary  
currency, especially where  
divers are concerned, is  
more likely the incredible  
diving, check out the  
mantas in Miil Channel.  
Four grouped islands make  
up Yap Proper, with 39  
square miles of land.

## Truk



Truk (Chuuk): Clear calm  
waters cover the largest  
loss in naval history—WWII  
wrecks, mostly Japanese,  
litter the Chuuk Lagoon  
floor. Even snorkelers can  
get an eyeful—that's how  
accessible some of them  
are. Others are very deep,  
very challenging dives. Soft  
corals veil these relics of  
war. Fifteen islands are  
the high points inside the  
lagoon, with ten of them  
inhabited.



Because the currents are strong and the seas choppy, you want to make sure you can be seen or heard from the boat. Carry a bright orange inflatable safety tube folded up in your BC pocket, in addition to a signal mirror, or audio horn that you attach to the auto inflator of your BC.

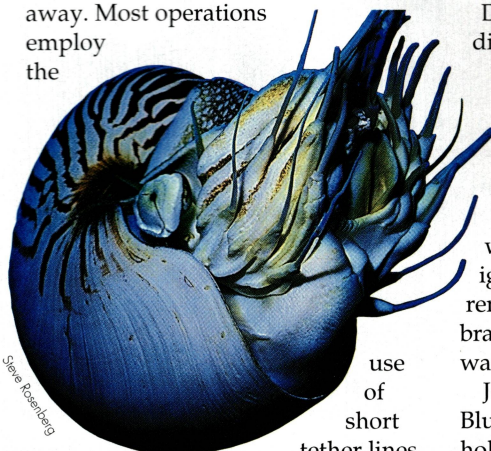
The fast boat trips between the dive sites and Koror tour you between the Rock Islands. While this is an intimate seaside view, if you get a chance, take a flight over the islands in one of the small planes owned by Paradise Air. It's a rarified perspective on one of the most rarified land- and seascapes on the planet. Tours are also available to take you to local villages, waterfalls, war relics and historic structures throughout the islands.

In Palau Lagoon, make a choice from an incredible menu of wall dives, with vertical drop-offs located on the outer edges of the barrier reefs and islands. Visibility varies greatly depending upon tidal flows, but often exceeds 150 feet. Most of these dives, located on the southern end of the lagoon, are approximately an hour by boat from Koror. Live-aboard trips allow you to double or triple your dives per day, with greater latitude on when you can dive.

Ngemelis Drop-off, also referred to as Big Drop-off, begins within a few feet of the surface and plummets vertically over 800 feet. On the east side of Ngemelis Island, this area is usually well protected. A thick carpet of marine life veils the walls with a variety of colorful sea fans, purple and red soft corals, and large branches of black coral. Small schools of pyramid butterflyfish and fusiliers surround divers, who can also expect to see a multitude of fairly rare tropicals, including square-spot anthias and purple-headed sand tilefish.

Blue Corner, located on the south side of Ngemelis Island, is certainly one of the most exciting dives in the world. No two dives here are ever the same; submerge over and over, it'll never lose its appeal. On incoming and outgoing

tides a nasty current rakes this spot, requiring divers to hold on tight to keep from being swept away. Most operations employ the



Steve Rosenberg

use of short tether lines

to prevent damage to corals. Because of the currents, a variety of pelagics frequent the spot, with gray sharks always visible. As a rule, the faster the current, the closer the sharks. Large schools of horse-eye jacks, barracuda, snapper and surgeonfish cruise the wall. And a large resident Napoleon wrasse will often insist on

having its photo taken the way as you line up that perfect shot.

During slack tide, the tenor of the dive changes completely. Great silvery schools of barracuda move up in the water column and you can swim as close as you want to take photos. Or just school on in and join the gang. When you get the chance, examine the vertical wall at Blue Corner that is usually ignored when there is a raging current. Immense sea fans and massive branches of black corals adorn the walls between 50- and 80-foot depths.

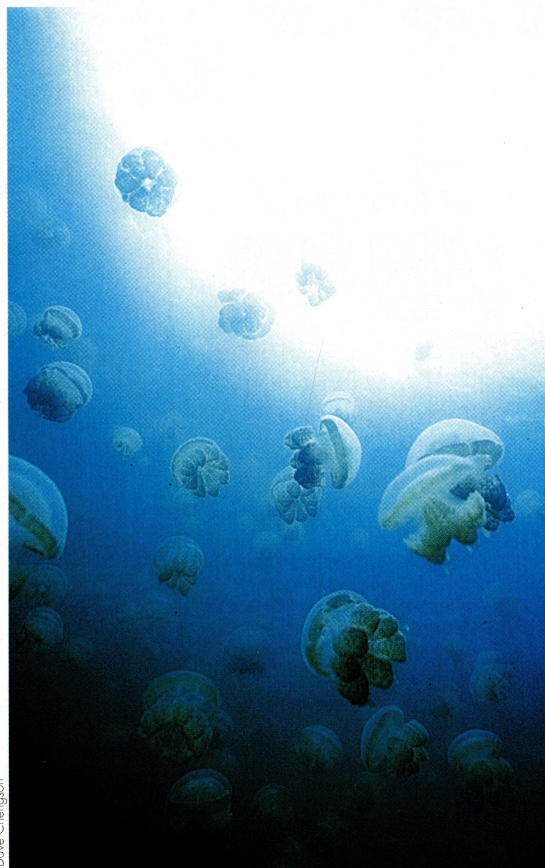
Just to the west of Blue Corner, the Blue Hole has upper entrances to the holes in just five feet of water, making it accessible only when the ocean is calm. There are four chimneys that provide elevator rides into the huge caverns and a labyrinth of tunnels within the reef. At a depth of 80 feet a large archway opens onto the face of the wall.

New Drop-off is another spectacular wall dive located between Ngemelis Wall and Blue Corner. Canyons that cut the sheer face of the wall are overgrown with sea fans, sponges, soft corals and an array of invertebrates. Stiff currents sometimes bathe the area, so turtles, jacks, sharks and barracuda are common, especially during tidal changes. For a particularly active spot, check the large depression in the wall at a depth of about 40 feet. Here gangs of teenaged shark ruffians harass smaller fish.

German Channel, a human-made channel cut through the southern end of the barrier reef in the early 1900s, allows access to the exciting southern wall dives. At low tide, the reef on both sides of the channel breaks the surface and the channel itself is only 10 feet deep. Manta rays love German Channel. Near the outside, at the manta cleaning station, these graceful creatures hover over a patch reef in about 60 feet of water. This is also an excellent place for a night dive. Large sea fans provide protection for long-nose hawkfish.

*Continued on page 121*

For more information see the **Dive Travel Planner on page 101.**

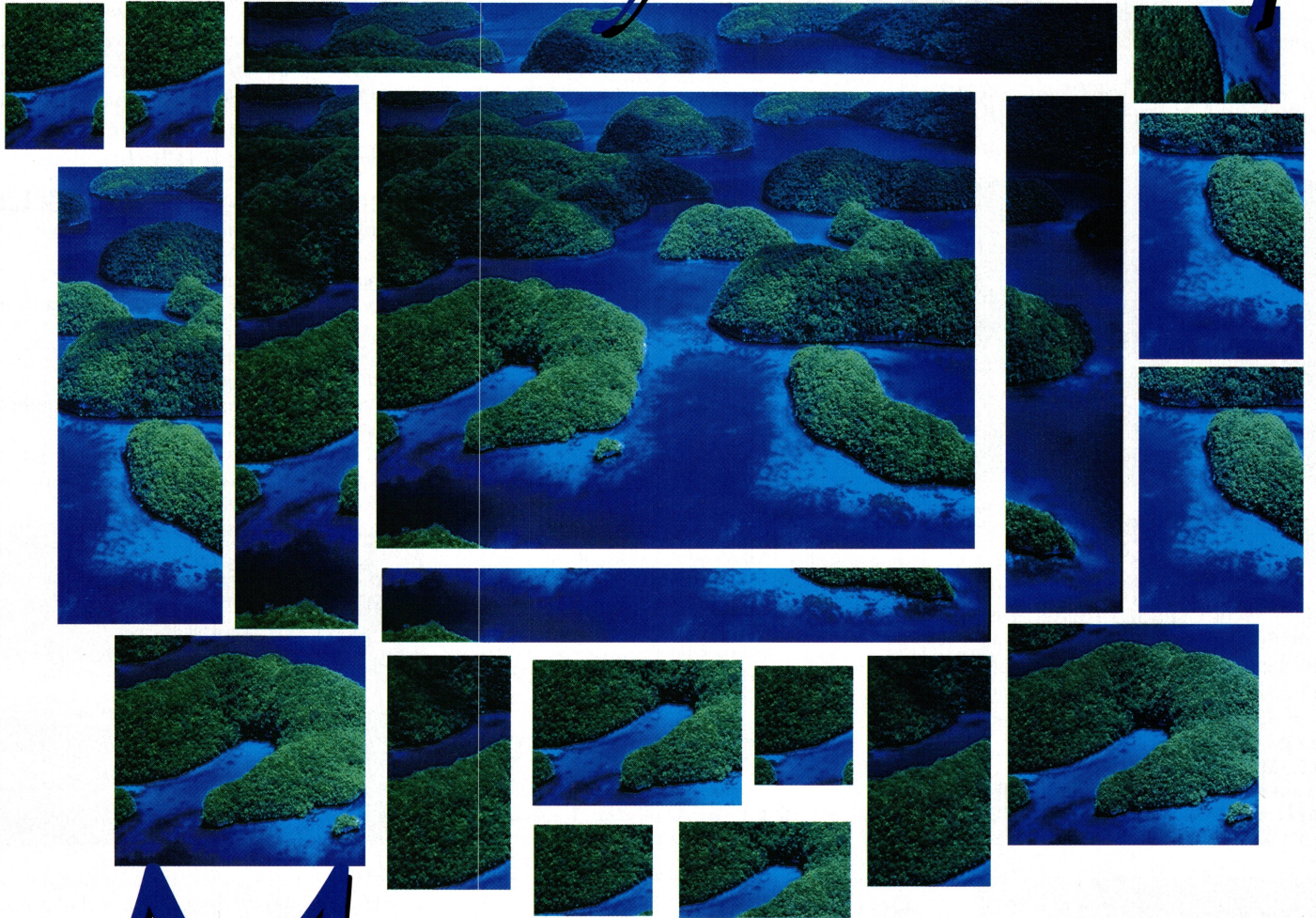


Dave Chergson

**Above: Up close with the rare chambered nautilus; Below: Supernatural view of the inhabitants of Jellyfish Lake.**



# *The Many Sides of*



# *Micronesia*

## **Crown Jewels of The Pacific...**

Unspoiled reefs and luminous blue lagoons.

Waters teeming with life and color.

Shipwrecks, dropoffs, everything a diver could ever ever want, and a fascinating mix of cultures, traditions, legends and history—welcome to the islands of Micronesia.

A Special Dive Travel  
Promotion



# Visions of Palau

The Rock Islands (previous page) are among the most unique geographic features of the natural world. And the excitement doesn't end there. Palau is home

to some of the most renowned world-class dive sites anywhere—Blue Corner, German Channel, Ngmelis Drop-off and Peleiu Corner.



## Carp Island Resort/ Palau Diving Center

Intimate Carp Island Resort—no cars, no TV, no telephones, just a deserted white-sand beach and the best diving in the Pacific. A vibrant reef just a meter below the surface, dropping off 250 meters in a breath-taking wall. Watch the sun rise on a deserted beach and set in a sea of gold.

**Carp Island Resort,**  
P.O. Box 5,  
Koror State, Palau 96940  
Call: 011-680-488-2978  
Fax: 011-680-488-3155

## Splash

Enjoy Palau's world-class diving and the convenience of having a dive center, Nikonos photo/video center, dive store and repair counter all in one place. Splash Photo Palau and Pro Shop are located next to the beach at the Palau Pacific Resort.

Call  
**(800) 247-3483**

Fax  
011-680-488-1741

## Sam's Dive Tours & West Plaza Hotels



The place to stay in Palau with three excellent locations to serve you. Enjoy modern accommodations with friendly service at affordable rates. Let Sam's Dive Tours take you to the most beautiful lagoon on the planet. Experience the warmth of gentle, gin-clear waters. See Sharks, Manta Rays, WWII Wrecks, soft corals, and Palau's famous drop-offs. Sam's Dive Tours' personalized service with small groups and fully equipped dive boats will ensure your safety and satisfaction. The Choice Is Yours.

Or Call:  
**1-800-794-9RNR**



### West Plaza Hotels

P.O. Box 280, Koror,  
Republic of Palau 96940  
Tel: 011 (680)488-2133  
Fax: 011(680)488-2136

### Sam's Dive Tours

P.O. Box 428  
Koror, Republic of Palau 96940  
Tel: 011 (680)488-1062  
Fax: 011(680)488-5003



Sam's Dive Tours

# Time for Truk

Explore the sunken Japanese naval fleet in Truk Lagoon! The marine life and historical artifacts of these WWII wrecks offer beauty and adventure to all types of divers and snorkelers. Decorated by white soft corals, anemones and sea fans, they are a vibrant memorial to the unfortunate victims of WWII.

## Sundance Dive Shop/Truk Lagoon

- Deluxe and economy dive packages from US\$740 pp.
- Incredible underwater museum of more than 40 WWII wrecks to choose from
- Spectacular reef diving
- Tropical tour package includes sight-seeing and lagoon boat tours

**Dive Sites**—Truk lagoon wrecks and outer reefs

**Boats**—34'; 8-10 cap.; two 23' 4 cap

**Services**—2-tank dive day (1 morning, 1 afternoon; Snorkeling, \$50 includes boat tour; Night dives on request; Computer diving.



**Hotel/Dive Packages** (Truk Continental or Pacific Gardens)—7 ngs/6 days: \$740, includes hotel transfers, min. 12 dives + night dives on request. Custom packages available on request.

**Sundance Tours and Dive Shop**  
P.O. Box 85, Moen, Truk 96942

**Call: (800) 424-0065**

phone: 011-691-330-4234

Fax: 011-691-330-4451



## Truk Stop Hotel

A newly opened hotel that features the most popular restaurant on the island. Owner operated and located right on the water—within easy walking distance of major shops, stores and dive facilities. Tastefully decorated suites include a/c, ceiling fans, private bathroom, refrigerator, telephone and cable TV. For reservations, or more information contact: Truk Stop Hotel, Box 546, Truk State, FM 96941

**Call: (691) 330-4232, or 330-4233**

**Fax: (691) 330-2286**



# Manta Ray Bay Hotel & Yap Divers

*Famous for its namesake mantas of course, this spot also has a lot more to offer in its prolific waters...*



*Manta Ray Bay Hotel—it's "the most personable dive resort in this part of the world."*

**A**re you ready to take the next step toward your advancement in diving? You're feeling pretty comfortable now that you've been to a few spots in the Caribbean? If your answers are "yes," why not consider the island of Yap in Micronesia?

If you haven't already heard, Yap is one of the foremost places on earth for divers to get up close and personal with giant manta rays. But that's not all. With visibility usually exceeding 100 feet and pristine corals frequented by hordes of fish, it has become a legend in the world of diving.

Located between Guam and Palau, Yap has become a prime destination for divers in Micronesia. The Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers, headquartered at the hotel (and the only PADI 5 Star Facility in Yap), is an excellent choice for divers who come to experience all Yap has to offer.

Celebrating its sixth year on April 27th, the hotel has 23 spacious, well-appointed rooms overlooking the water. But this isn't some gone-tropo spot on the

fringe of the map, in the rooms visitors will find minibars, TV/VCR, a safe, built-in hairdryers, and all the amenities of a first-class hotel. The restaurant serves up memorable creations by the former executive chef of the Palau Pacific Resort. Take dinner on the third floor overlooking the bay, or belly up to the thatched-roof bar next to the dive dock.

Manta Ray Bay's host, owner Bill Acker, works hard to make a visit to Yap one for the memory banks and photo albums. Sure the Manta Visions Photo and Video Center helps in the obvious way, providing E-6 processing and custom videos among other services. But Bill Acker's goal goes even further: to establish the Manta Ray Bay Hotel as "the most personable dive resort in this part of the world." After years of diving the waters around Yap, Acker knows all the underwater nooks and crannies the way you know your living room. He attempts to make at least one dive with every guest sometime during their stay and feels that he maintains his love for diving through his interaction with visitors from around the globe.

Although Yap offers excellent diving on the walls outside its fringing reef, manta ray encounters are what visiting divers seek. The incoming and outgoing tidal patterns in the channels around the island dictate manta ray feeding and cleaning schedules. For this reason it is important to dive with a competent crew, familiar with the environmental variables. Yap Divers is a perfect fit.

For most travelers, particularly those from North America and Europe, a trip to Micronesia is a fairly long haul. Why take a chance and risk staying in less than satisfactory accommodations and diving with an unknown operator? Make it easy on yourself. Whether you

are traveling through Micronesia enroute to other destinations, or making Yap your sole stop, Bill Acker and his friendly staff can handle all your needs. For great accommodations, food and diving all under one roof, pick the Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers. It's an easy recipe for tropical fun and excitement! --

## MANTA RAY BAY YAP DIVERS

**Phone:** (011) 691 350 2300

**Fax:** (011) 691 350 4567 and 350 3841

**E-mail:** yapdivers@mantaray.com or billacker@mantaray.com

**Accommodations:** 23 air-conditioned rooms

**Restaurant:** yes

**Weather:** tropical, 76–88°

**Water temperature:** 81° year-round

**Boats:** five, ranging from 21 to 38 feet

**Capacity:** from 4 to 20 divers

**Number of dives per day:** 2-4, plus night dives (5 dives a day is possible)

**Night dives:** daily, on request

**Oxygen/Radio on board:** yes/yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** on board first aid

**Rental equipment:** yes

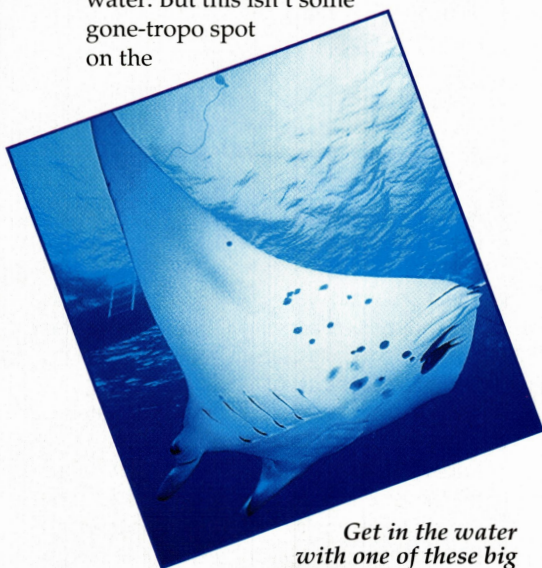
**Photography:** full-service photo/video center with E-6 processing, custom videos for individuals, couples or groups, instruction, repair, rental, sales and advice.

**Certifying agencies:** PADI

**Specialty classes:** All PADI courses through Asst. Inst., plus naturalist, coral reef ecology, and numerous photo/video classes

**Number of instructors:** 3

**Prices:** Ranging from \$110/night up to \$240 for the suite with a private jacuzzi



*Get in the water with one of these big guys—it's a thrill worth a big entry in the logbook.*



# Carp Island Resort

by Janet Blaser

*This pristine getaway is in the primally beautiful Rock Islands...*

**F**lying over Micronesia, one sees numerous islands rising from the brilliant azure ocean.

Promises of unparalleled adventure intrigue the diver's mind, because beneath those waters are world-renowned dive sites that capture the imagination and tug at the heart.

Carp Island Resort peeks out from one of the Rock Islands—the crown jewels of the Pacific—bordered by powdery sand and soft turquoise water. Tucked on one point of the tiny island, a cluster of red-roofed buildings nestles among emerald palms. There are no other signs of civilization; indeed, Carp Island Resort has been the sole inhabitant for 20 years.

Walk between palm trees slung with hammocks to the mile-long beach, just a few sandy steps from individual cabins and the main guest house, which houses the restaurant and recreational area. Included in the price of your stay are three meals a day, and all transfers.

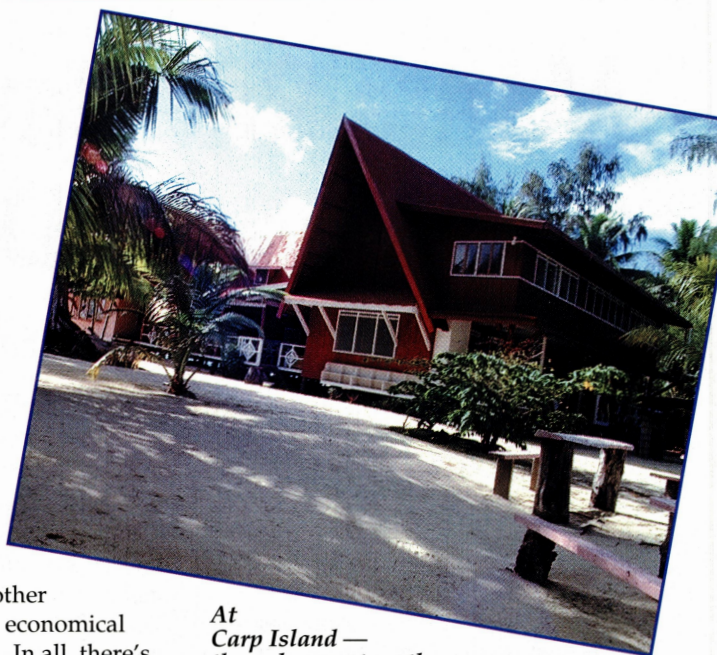
The charming cottages are built up off the ground, allowing ocean breezes to cool your quarters. All accommodations (available in single, double or triple occupancy) have

private showers and a separate living area. The divehouse, where rooms are shared with other guests, provides a more economical way to visit Carp Island. In all, there's space for only 70 visitors. The mood is informal, and the outside world is, replaced by a daily dose of the Triple S Combo—sun, sand and sea.

And divers, all those stories about the pristine reefs of Palau are true—check it out for yourself. Extending out from shore, a coral reef glitters barely two meters below the surface. As you reach the edge of the reef, a 250-meter drop-off plunges into a dramatic undersea world full of sea life. The rare nautilus sparkles in the watery depths; sea turtles swim lazily by, and giant sea fans wave from every bend of the reef. Blue holes abound, and pelagic activity is abundant, especially from January to April, and again in July and August.

World War II wrecks harbor half a century of sea and reef life, and providing interesting opportunities for exploration. Night dives showcase the lesser-seen inhabitants. And although the diving close in offers unlimited chances for exploration, Carp Island Resort also offers boat trips to well-known sites like Peleliu Corner and Chandelier Cave, as well as excursions to the surrounding Rock Islands. What distinguishes Carp Island Resort is its proximity to what you're looking for—those legendary sites—it's just 10–15 minutes

by boat to any dive site in Palau. Lunch and drinks are included, and



*At Carp Island — the only resort on the island—get a dose of sun and sea.*

five NAUI-certified instructors offer courses for all levels of diver.

If you want to experience Palau, the Carp Island Resort offers a true getaway-from-it-all vacation, a visit to an unspoiled hideaway in the fullest sense of the word.

## CARP ISLAND

**Address:** P.O. Box 5, Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

**Phone:** (011) 680 488-2978

**Fax:** (011) 680 488-3155

**Reservations through U.S. dive wholesalers:**

Rothschild Dive Safaris (800) 359-0747;  
Continental Micronesia-Island Adventures  
(800) 900-7657

**Weather:** tropical year-round, rain from July–Oct still with plenty of sun

**Number of rooms:** 23

**a/c:** no

**Restaurant:** yes

**Pool:** no

**Water temperature:** 80s

**Boats:** two—a) 24-footer and b) 29-footer

**Capacity:** a) 8 divers; b) 12 divers

**Number of dives per day:** 2-tank boat dive

**Night dives:** yes

**Oxygen on board:** yes

**Radio on board:** yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** dive guide onboard

**Nearest recompression chamber:** hospital

**Certifying agencies:** NAUI

**Specialty classes:** introductory, open water

**Number of instructors:** 5

**Prices:** Starting at \$30 per night (low season for the dive house) ranging up to \$100 (peak season for a single). Meals not included.

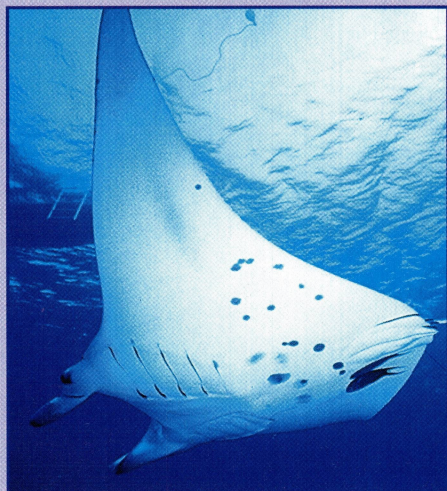
Diving tours run \$90 for a two-tank dive with lunch and drinks.



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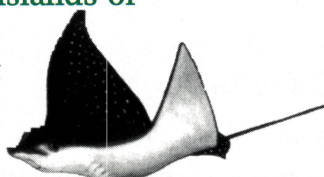
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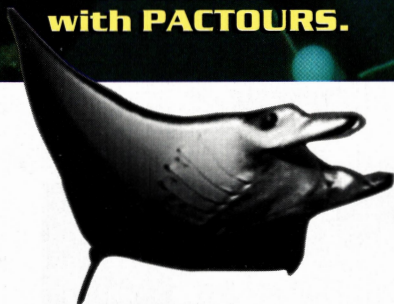
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1. How Many Years Have You Been Diving? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What Are The Last Three Places You Have Traveled To For Diving?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What Are The Top Three Places You Would Like To Travel To Dive?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have You Ever Traveled To Micronesia? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

5. If No, What Was The Reason?

\_\_\_\_ Cost \_\_\_\_ Limited Interest \_\_\_\_ Distance \_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (for notification): \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a subscriber ? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

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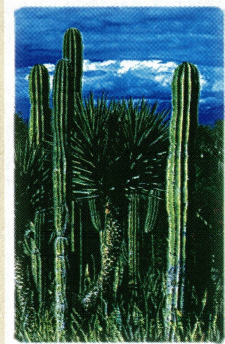
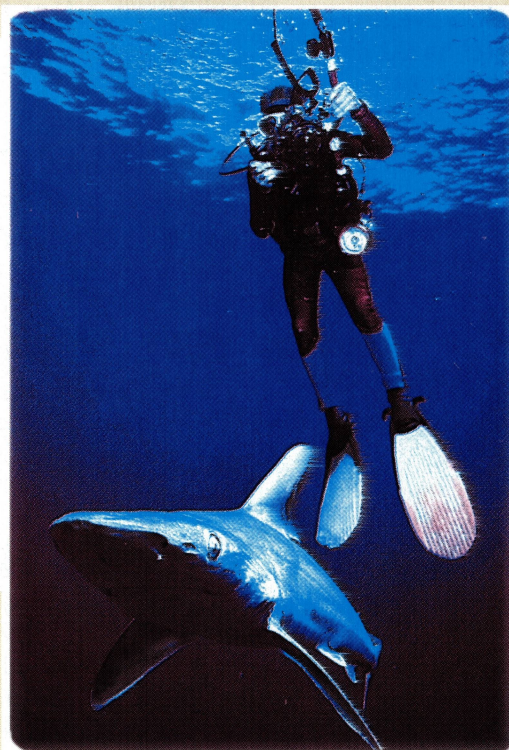
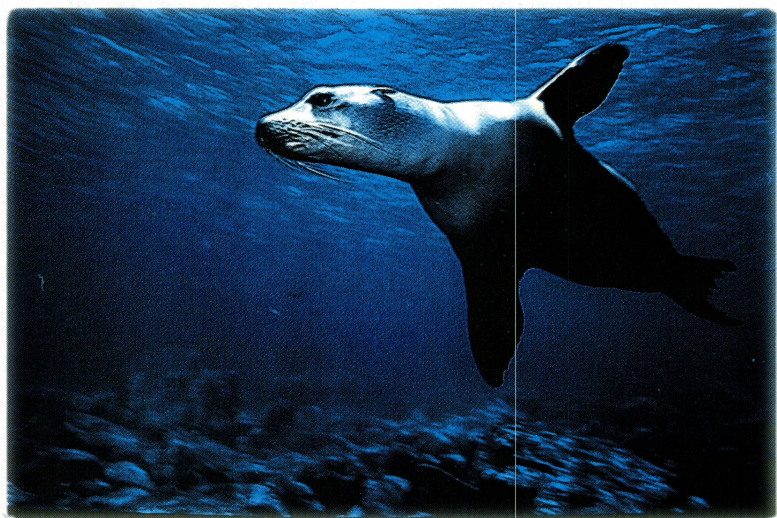


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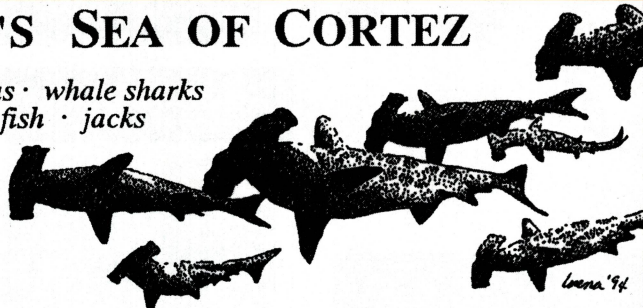
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- CABO SAN LUCAS -



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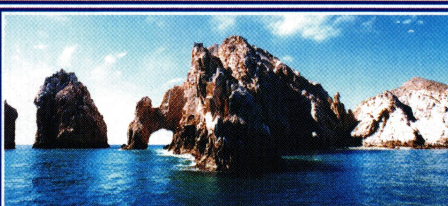
Dive with us in Cabo - enjoy safe, fun, worry-free dives. We're the American owned and operated diving outfit in Cabo. PADI, NAUI and SSI accredited, fully insured, and we only employ certified, bilingual instructors & guides. We offer dive trips to the entire Los Cabos area: Sand Falls, Los Arcos Pinnacle, Gordo Banks and La Paz Islands. We offer full tours, with air, hotel and all your outdoor adventures, such as snorkeling, fishing, horseback riding, water-skiing, jet-skiing, sailing and hiking.

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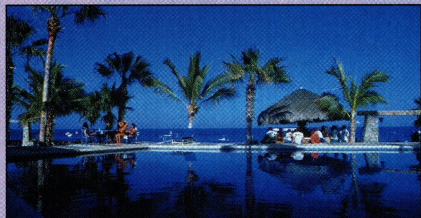
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## Getting There

**Time Zone:** Mountain Standard Time, or PST + 1

**Airports:** San José del Cabo and La Paz Airports **Airlines:** Alaska, Aero California, America West, Aero Mexico, United, Continental, Mexicana and Sun Trips

**Entry Regulations:** U.S. passport or proof of citizenship and return ticket, Mexican Tourist Card. Tourist cards can be obtained at any Mexican Consulate or Government Tourism Office in the U.S. and are free.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** The currency is the peso that exchanges at U.S. \$1 = 7.41 pesos, but fluctuates frequently. U.S. currency is also widely accepted.

**Airport Fees:** There is a U.S. \$12 departure fee out of Cabo San Lucas.

**Electricity:** 120 volts, 60 cycles

**Language:** The predominant language is Spanish; however, English is widely spoken.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** Amex, Visa, Mastercard and Diner's Club are most used.

**Communications:** Phone service is available, although it is very expensive for international calls. Postal service is also available.

**Climate:** The average annual temperature is around 75°. There are cool evenings between October and April, but late summer temps can reach up into the 90s.

**Dress:** Casual and lightweight for warm weather.

**Tipping:** A 10 to 15 percent gratuity is generally accepted; however, taxi drivers do not accept tips unless hired by the hour.

**Cuisine:** You can find most any type of cuisine, from coffee shops to Chinese to fast food, but the local Mexican fare is strongly recommended. Steak and seafood seem to be the main staples and there are many surf 'n turf dedicated restaurants to choose from.

**Baja in Brief: La Paz**—The bay was first discovered in 1533 by a Spanish expedition, but explorers were chased away by Indians shortly after landing. Throughout the 17th century, rich oyster beds and precious pearls brought fortune hunters in droves, but all attempts to establish a colony were short-lived. La Paz was finally settled in 1829. To this day it retains a touch of the sleepy, colonial atmosphere. Check out the Dove of Peace Monument, a large sculpture inscribed: "And if you want peace (paz), I offer it to you in the sunny peace of my bay," or stroll down the historic, palm-lined waterfront. **San José del Cabo**—Another quaint marriage of past and present. Settled in 1730, San José del Cabo has become known for its wealth of tropical agriculture. Coconuts, mangos, citrus fruits and spices, along with a great deal of tourist interest have created a steady growth. The Plaza Park town square is a must-see, acting as an old-world centerpiece for church, tourism office and monument to General José Antonio Mijares. **Cabo San Lucas**—Seeing this busy hub for fishing boats and private yachts it's hard to believe that the bay at Cabo San Lucas was once a prime pirate hiding place. Maybe some remained to lead divers on adventure tours or through the town's booming nightlife: you're the kind of person who thrives on nightlife. Cabo is the place. Strap on those *buraches* and go disco hopping along boulevards Lázaro Cárdenas and Marina. For a little culture with your party, take a trip to the Galería El Dorado for a great collection of arts and crafts by local artists.

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# Delfin Hotels & Resorts

by Janet Blaser

*Take your pick from a menu of elegant offerings...*

Representing half a dozen of the finest resorts in Los Cabos, Delfin Hotels and Resorts is uniquely qualified to offer discriminating travelers exactly what they're looking for. No matter which locale you choose, you can be assured of the same level of attentive, personal service, warm hospitality, and impeccable provisions to make your stay one to remember for years to come.

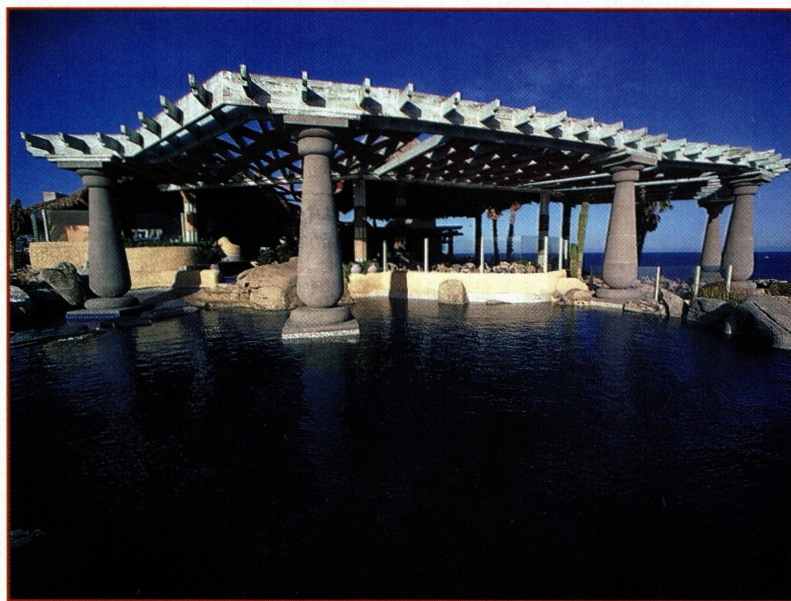
Perched on the tip of the Baja peninsula, **Misiones del Cabo** is literally built into the cliffs overlooking both the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific Ocean. Panoramic views abound in every direction, and Cabo's famous El Arco is located right offshore. Two secluded coves provide safe swimming and snorkeling in the crystalline waters you've been dreaming of. The complex itself is an architectural masterpiece, with three free-form swimming pools cantilevered into the cliff edges, connected by waterfalls cascading from one level to the next. Another pool, set high on the clifftop, features a swim-up palapa bar and yet another perfect spot to watch the panoramic sunset each evening.

Sumptuous one- and two-bedroom condominium suites have all the comforts of home—color cable TV, full kitchens, dining areas and air conditioning—but you'll remember you're on vacation as you step out onto your oversized balcony and bask in the sun, sand and sea-air of Cabo. Many rooms also have private whirlpool spas on the deck or in the master bedroom.

Misiones del Cabo is especially popular with newlyweds, and honeymooning couples automatically have their rooms upgraded to those with a private jacuzzi at no extra charge. The spacious grounds and breathtaking location provide a premiere backdrop for this most important of times, and in fact, many couples choose to have their whole wedding here. Trained staff members ensure the event will create memories for a lifetime, with special package rates for the wedding party.

The on-site restaurant, Da Georgio II, quickly established a reputation among both locals and

*Taking the family is definitely a fun-filled option when you choose one of Delfin's hotels.*



*The Misiones del Cabo offers panoramic views, elegant surroundings.*

guests as one of Cabo's premiere restaurants, and features a winning combination of unbeatable views, exquisite cuisine, and captivating ambience. The resort also offers tennis courts and complimentary shuttle service to downtown Cabo San Lucas.

About half an hour east, on the Sea of Cortez, visitors will find two more Delfin properties, **La Jolla de Los Cabos** and the **Howard Johnson Plaza Suite Resort**. Both are located within a mile of two

new signature Jack Nicklaus 18-hole golf courses, offering the golf aficionado unparalleled greens in a fairytale setting. Just ask the concierge to arrange tee-off times, and you're ready to go.

La Jolla de Los Cabos is a premium beachfront condominium resort and spa that offers guests a dizzying array of options, or the chance to just kick back and relax. Feel like swimming? Take your choice from four swimming pools, three in the "quiet zone," one with a swim-up palapa bar and outdoor jacuzzis. Or, if you like, take a few steps to the wide white sand of the Costa Azul Beach, where you can enjoy safe swimming or relaxing



## DELFIN

Phone: 1(800) 524-5104

Fax: 1(408) 459-9494

### Prices:

Marina Cabo Plaza \$70-90\*\*;  
La Jolla de Los Cabos \$105-350\*\*;  
Terrasol Beach Resort \$160-475\*\*;  
Misiones del Cabo \$148-300\*\*;  
Howard Johnson Plaza Suite \$80-180\*.

\*Denotes 10% tax

\*\*Denotes a 10% tax, plus a 10% service charge.



Left, comfortable, well-appointed rooms become a vacation home.

Right, at La Jolla de Los Cabos, diners at the water's edge catch a pool breeze during lunch.



moonlit walks. Other activities include tennis, horseback riding and chartered deep-sea fishing and diving trips.

And while the spectacular setting soothes your mind, feel free to let your body rejuvenate in the fully-equipped men's and women's exercise gyms, complete with sauna, steam bath and showers. After all, you are on vacation.

In the heart of Cabo San Lucas, just a mile from town, is the **Terrasol Beach Resort**. Frequently used by photographers as a backdrop for fashion photo shoots—*Vogue* and *Swimwear Illustrated* are regular visitors—the striking mission-style complex sits at the very tip of Land's

End, the most magnificent beach in Baja. Surrounded by the desert landscape, fronted by the spectacular azure ocean, the Terrasol Beach Resort offers studios or one-, two- and three-bedroom condos, all with full kitchens, terraces, fireplaces and air-conditioning. If you're in the mood for shopping, a smorgasbord of restaurants and cantinas, or exciting nightlife, the bustling town is just a mile away. Or, if you choose to stay close to your home-away-from-home, Terrasol offers a gourmet restaurant and lounge, tennis courts, swimming pools,

putting green and a workout room.

The **Marino Cabo Plaza**, a smaller hotel, is just five minutes from the center of town in the Cabo San Lucas Marina. All rooms are studio suites, with some kitchenettes. Rates here are among the most competitive in the area.

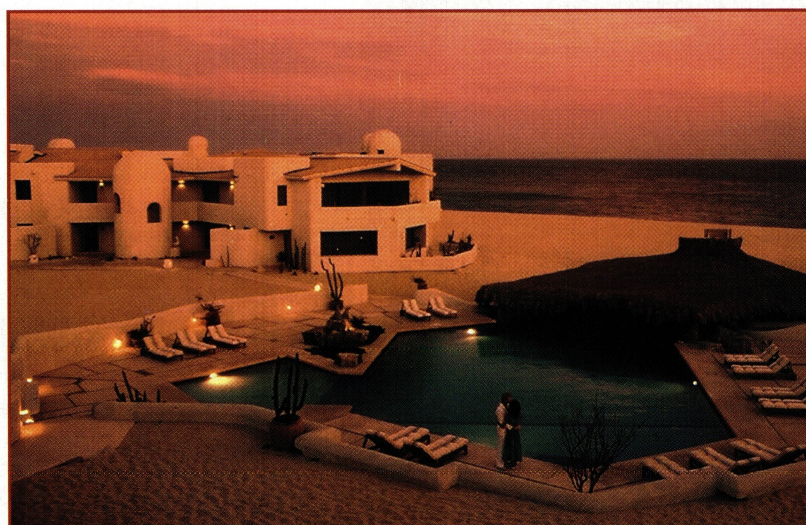
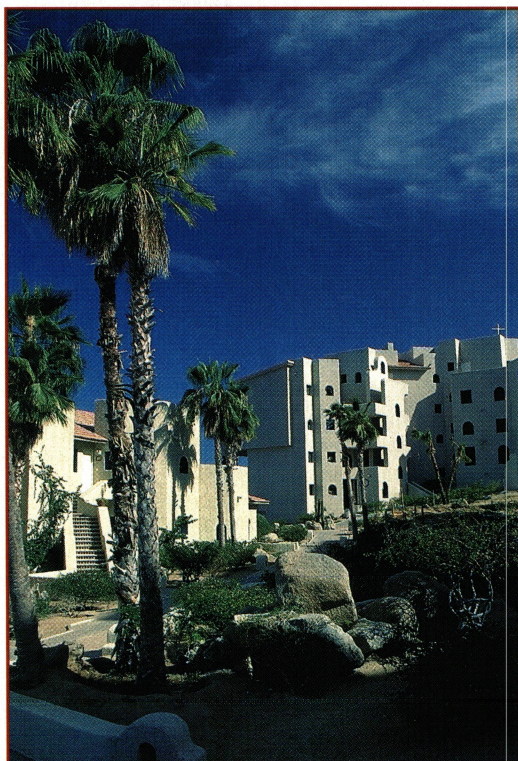
If you've already decided on

Cabo as your vacation destination, Delfin Hotels and Resorts offers a myriad of choices for whatever you have in mind. Besides accommodations, Delfin can arrange diving and deep-sea fishing trips from any of their properties when you schedule your trip. Prompt, courteous service starts in the office and continues throughout your stay, so that your vacation in paradise will be full of all the magic, serenity and beauty the area has to offer.



*Sunrise and sunset: on the left, the luxurious Misiones del Cabo is popular with newlyweds.*

*Below, the Terrasol Beachfront Resort occupies a stretch of beach that puts guests right beneath the sheltering sky.*





# Cortez Club & La Concha Beach Resort

**L**ong held as one of California's special little secrets, Baja has at last been recognized internationally for what it truly is—a diving destination with plenty of clout when it comes to deserted beaches, big pelagics and stunning first-rate resorts.

And the Cortez Club and La Concha Beach Resort, located just north of La Paz, is the one of the hottest newcomers to the happening scene that's emerging south of the border. The five-star resort welcomes guests into a sumptuous lobby—high beamed ceilings arc over the tile floors, windows abound—that sets the tone for a casual yet elegant atmosphere. The 107 air-conditioned rooms and suites lie along a palm-shaded stretch of coast. Like an oasis, the turquoise pools, both beachfront-swimming and therapy, beckon desert seekers into their refreshing waters. But La Concha's amenities extend far beyond the poolside bar and tennis courts. This deluxe resort has conference facilities for up to 125, room

service and video rentals, a cantina with nightly entertainment, a gift shop featuring Mexican hand-made crafts and a weekly fiesta. And all of it comes with a spectacular view of the real centerpiece of the landscape—the Sea of Cortez.

And what a sea it is. Populated by such notables as schooling hammerheads, sea lions and giant mantas, morays, whale sharks and whales, plus, of course, the numerous tropical fishes, Jacques Cousteau once called the Sea of Cortez "the aquarium of the world." And the Cortez Club, the newest and largest International Diving and Watersports Club in Baja, is right there to whisk you beneath the surface. Their fleet of boats, ranging in size from 22 to 127 feet, can handle a day dive trip or a live-aboard safari that ranges over the entire Sea of Cortez.

The diver training program, of which they justifiably proud, has a team of master instructors who speak eight languages, two air-conditioned classrooms, and special student boats. Within the year, the Club will become a PADI IDC center running five instructor courses a year. An emphasis on education means the Club offers every specialty course, as well as intro dives, resort courses, and a special snorkeling class for adults and children. And the Cortez Club is prepared to get you wet in a variety of other ways—from Hobie Cats and kayaks, to jet skis, waverunners, surfboards and sailboards.

With a partnership that just began in January 1996, the Club Cortez and La Concha Resort have made a great marriage—

*Enjoy the watersports available at the Cortez Club at La Concha Beach Resort.*

the boundless energy of the newcomer teamed with the experience and continuity of the mature. Come see for yourself what Californians have been guarding for years as their special secret—the desert beauty of the Baja peninsula, the historic city of La Paz, the living waters of the Sea of Cortez. And experience it all from the comfort of a world-class hotel in a world-class setting. — Spike Allen

## CORTEZ CLUB/LA CONCHA

**Phone:** Club: (011) 52 112 16120/1;

**Hotel:** (011) 52 112 16161

**Fax:** Club: (011) 52 112 16123;

**Hotel:** (011) 52 112 16218

**U.S. direct booking:** (800) 999-BAJA

**Weather:** Nov–Mar 80°; Mar–Nov 100°

**Water temp:** Nov–Mar 70°; Mar–Nov 82°

**Number of rooms:** 107

**a/c:** yes

**Restaurant:** yes

**Pool:** yes

**Boats:** 8; from 22 ft. to 127 ft., plus two live-aboards

**Capacity:** from 4 to 25 divers

**Number of dives per day:** two or three

**Night dives:** yes

**Oxygen on board:** yes

**Radio on board:** yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** medic on board each boat

**Nearest recompression chamber:** Cabo San Lucas, 15 minutes by air ambulance

**Certifying agencies:** PADI

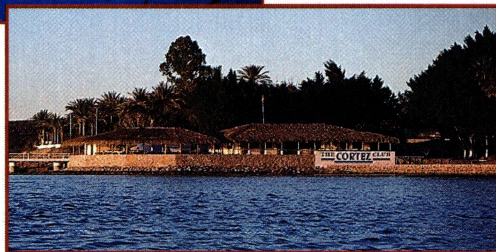
**Specialty classes:** All PADI courses

**Number of instructors:** 8

**Prices:** Many hotel and dive packages. Call for the latest information.



*Top: Dive the Sea of Cortez for hammerheads; Right: the Cortez Club offers easy access to the waterfront.*





# Hotel Cabo San Lucas & Cabo Acuadeportes

by Janet Blaser

*An award-winning hotel teamed up with a top-notch dive center.*

Once you've decided the endless beaches, gorgeous sunsets and dazzling array of marine life in Cabo San Lucas are what you want in a vacation spot, the choice is then to find accommodations that suit your needs.

Hotel Cabo San Lucas, a 2,500-acre resort curled around Chileno Bay at the tip of Baja, has been called the most unique luxury resort in all of Mexico. In fact, *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine selected it as one of the top 50 tropical resorts in the world, and named it to "The Gold List" of the best places to stay on the planet.

Here, the turquoise waters of Chileno Bay offer a gentle background for relaxation, and myriad opportunities for

*After an eye-popping dive, laze around on the warm, sunny stretches of the Cabo San Lucas.*

diving, fishing and other activities.

On shore, a variety of villas, private suites, studios and rooms offer accommodations that are luxurious and comfortable. Whether you decide on a three-bedroom villa with a private pool, or opt for a studio, all offer impeccable resort living at its best.

Elegant dining features continental, Mexican and American cuisine. Nightly entertainment is equally diverse, from mariachi s to fireworks.

On the hotel's grounds, a waterfall feeds a three-tiered freshwater pool, inlaid with mosaics. Golf, archery, horseback riding, land and sea tours, you can do everything under the sun, or nothing at all—your choice.

Teamed with the hotel for more than a decade, Cabo Acuadeportes Watersports Centers (with two exclusive beach locations) have been providing watersports enthusiasts with access to the marine world. Beach and

boat dives get divers to sites like Chileno Reef, a beautiful finger reef that juts from the beach about a half-mile into the bay. Calm shallow waters and an abundance of colorful tropical fish populate the easy adventure. In fact, more than 800 species of fish have been catalogued in the Sea of Cortez—so many

that the area is often referred to as the world's largest fish trap.

Cabo Acuadeportes is a NAUI Pro facility, an SSI-training agency and the first PADI 5-star dive center in Cabo. Bilingual, certified dive guides are friendly and knowledgeable, with personalized attention to your every need. Daily introductory classes launch beginners into the crystalline waters in no time. And if you're experienced, night dives and specialty classes are



*Small groups and spectacular scenery are at the core of a perfect dive vacation.*

available. There are three, single-tank boat dives every day, and since all the sites are within 10 minutes of either dive center, you can even do all three in one day, if you like.

Cabo Acuadeportes also offers snorkeling packages, waterskiing, canoe and kayak rentals, wave runners, parasailing, windsurfing, sailing and boat tours. If it's in or on the water, Cabo Acuadeportes can help you do it.

## HOTEL CABO SAN LUCAS & CABO ACUADEPORTES

**US Representative:** Dive Tours

**Telephone:** 800-433-0885

**Fax:** 713-680-2306

**Number of rooms:** 77, plus 8 villas

**Air Conditioning:** yes

**Restaurant:** yes

**Pools:** yes

**Prices:** \$130–1100 day

**Weather:** Day 75°–90°F, Night 70°–80°F

**Water temperature:** Summer 75–85°

**Boats:** five: (1) 22-foot Tri-hull, (1) 22-foot V

hull, (2) 24-foot V hull, (1) 26-foot Skipjack

**Capacity:** Total of 40 divers

**Number of dives per day:** 3

**Night dives:** \$45 per person by reservation

**Oxygen on board:** Yes

**Radio on board:** Yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** Cabo San Lucas

**Nearest recompression chamber:** Cabo San Lucas

**Rental equipment:** yes

**Certification classes:** yes

**Certifying agencies:** PADI, NAUI, SSI

**Specialty classes:** yes

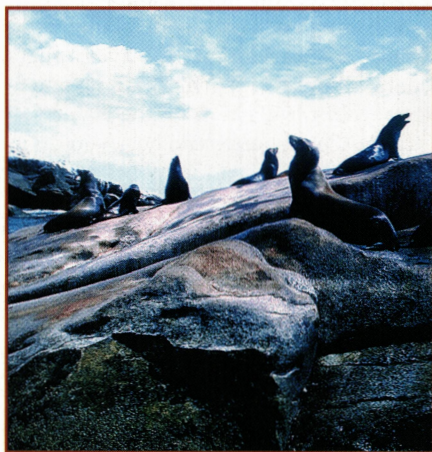
**Number of instructors:** 5



# Hotel Bahia Los Frailes In Cabo Pulmo Park

*Nestled in a serene bay, this hotel is right in the heart of the quiet side of the cape.*

**C**ombining the simplicity of a country inn with the elegance of a luxury resort, Hotel Bahia Los Frailes offers guests the best of both worlds. Your home-away-from-home will be in one of the five thatched-roof cabanas (accommodations for a total of 16 guests) facing the turquoise waters of the Bay of Los Frailes, a gentle cove on the eastern side of the lower Baja peninsula.



*Take a hike over Frailes Rock to visit the nearest neighbors.*

Just past the rocky tip of Cabo Frailes is the Sea of Cortez, where Mother Nature provides spectacular sunrise and sunset shows. And you're guaranteed a front-row seat, on your private patio, or via a stroll along the white crescent of sand curving around the bay.

A day hike over Frailes Rock takes you to a sea lion colony, and often turtles, porpoise and even large mantas can be spotted from shore. From January to April, thousands of whales come to the warm waters to bear their calves, and if you're lucky you'll

see them relaxing and frolicking in the warm waters.

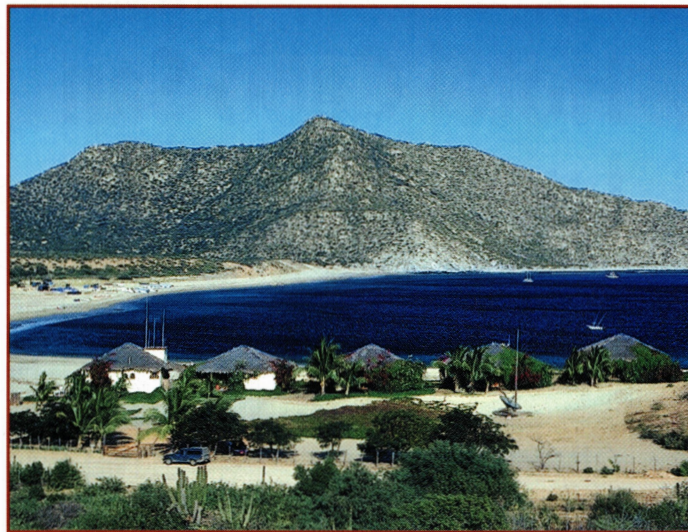
Diving or fishing trips can be arranged on the hotel's cruiser, or one of the five pangas—22-foot deluxe skiffs. A 700-foot deep marine canyon stretches into the bay—at places just a quarter-mile from shore. The proximity of the canyon means the possibility of glimpsing deep-water dwellers, whether by diving or enjoying the hotel's options for snorkeling, kayaking, fishing, hiking, windsurfing and boat tours.

One of the best dive and snorkeling sites is the Cabo Pulmo Reef, a federally protected marine reserve just a stone's throw north of the hotel—Hotel Bahia Los Frailes is the only hotel within 25 miles of the reef. And it's a truly lucky position to be in: one of only four coral reefs on the west coast of North America, the area is teeming with untouched sea life. There are also wrecks to explore, some so close to shore you can walk out to them. Other activities include hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking and windsurfing.

Back at the hotel, the easy life is sustained by home-cooked gourmet meals, served in the main house. Prepared with fruits, vegetables and herbs grown in the hotel's garden, the



*The easy life, a peaceful respite after a day of diving, hiking or biking.*



*Just a few quiet casitas strung along a bay of blue...ahhh, vacation.*

meals have a reputation even among the locals. Fresh bread is baked daily, and the margaritas are legendary.

Each of the suites is tastefully decorated with authentic Mexican furniture and traditional artwork. Wooden doors on each of the one- and two-bedroom cabanas are intricately carved, and pots of native plants brighten your doorstep and patio.

Hotel Bahia Los Frailes welcomes families, couples and singles with personalized, friendly service geared to your needs. Satisfied guests from around the world have commented, "The setting, the ambience, the service, the food—it's the best in Cabo." But don't take their word for it—try it yourself, we think you'll agree. -- Janet Blaser

## BAHIA LOS FRAILES

**Phone:** (011) 52-111-10122;

U.S. 1-800-762-BAJA

**Number of rooms:** 8 (accommodations for 16 guests in five beachfront cabanas as single rooms or suites)

**a/c:** yes

**Boats:** 5 pangas (fully outfitted 22-foot deluxe skiffs) and one cruiser

**Restaurant:** yes

**Weather:** 65–99°

**Water temperature:** 65–93°

**Night dives:** yes; \$45 per dive, including weights and tanks

**Day diving prices:** \$65 for two-tank dive, including weights and tanks

**Radio on board:** yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** La Ribera

**Nearest recompression chamber:** Cabo San Lucas

**Certifying agencies:** PADI

**Prices:** Vary depending on accommodations



## Bahamas

Blue holes and wall diving galore. A short economy-priced flight from Miami puts you in the middle of non-stop action. Easy long weekend for East Coasters.

## Baja

Close to home for west coasters, the wonders of the Sea of Cortez—the best in the west. Wide range of styles and prices.



## Micronesia

Blue Corner, Jellyfish Lake, Ngemelis Wall—world-class diving in what many consider the best diving destination in the world.

## East Africa

The original adventure-travel destination, this big-ticket trip deserves a couple of weeks. Be sure to add on a safari to make the most of your stay.

# Dive Travel Planner: Micronesia

### Destination: Micronesia

**Time Zone:** Micronesia has four time zones. Palau is PST + 17. Guam, the Northern Marianas, Yap and Chuuk are PST + 18. Pohnpei and Kosrae are PST + 19, and Majuro is PST + 20.

**Airport:** The international airport is located at the southern end of the largest island, Babelthup (pronounced "Babeldaob"). Upon deplaning, one of the first things you see is a large sign proclaiming Palau as the number one wonder of the underwater world.

**From the U.S.:** Getting to Palau is relatively easy. Continental Airlines has flights from the West Coast connecting to Guam through Honolulu. A one-night stay in Hawaii breaks up the long flight and gives dive gear and photo and video equipment sufficient time to make the right connections. From there, most flights arrive in Guam in the afternoon with plenty of time to make the connecting flight to a Continental Air Micronesia 727 for the final two-hour flight to Palau.

**Entry Regulations:** U.S. citizens are not required to have a passport, but it makes things easier. Without a passport, you'll need some other proof of citizenship like a birth certificate.

**Health Regulations:** Generally,

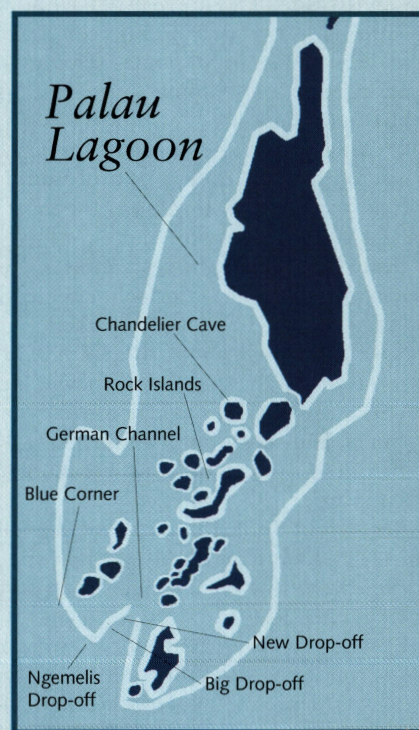
**Palau's diving is some of the best in the Pacific, which makes it some of the best in the world. Sites like Blue Corner and Ngemelis Drop-off put on an awe-inspiring show of big pelagics and massing schools. Add to that the many wrecks and unique dives like Jellyfish Lake, Chandelier Cave and German Channel and you have one of the hottest destinations in the world.**

Micronesia is a pretty healthy place to visit. Take precautions against infections, sunburn, heat exhaustion, diarrhea and intestinal parasites.

**Currency and Exchange:** The U.S. dollar is the only currency accepted in Micronesia.

## Dive Briefing

Diving Palau means nearly perfect conditions—visibility of 100 feet or more and water temperatures in the mid-80s. It also means ferocious currents that create a hospitable climate for a wide variety of marine life and experienced divers. There are still plenty of places for the newly certified, they just aren't the high-voltage places like Blue Corner and Ngemelis Wall. Fortunately, the less-known places are also excellent.



**Airport Fees:** Departure taxes are \$5 out of Kosrae and Pohnpei, and \$10 out of Majuro, Chuuk and Palau.

**Electricity:** 110/120 volts, 60 cycles with a flat, two-pronged outlet—same as the U.S.

**Domestic Transport:** *Land:* From the airport it takes about 20 minutes by



taxi or bus to drive to Koror, the nation's capital and commercial center. Buses or taxis are the main modes of transportation in Palau. It's about a 20-minute taxi or bus ride from the airport to Koror, the bustling hub of Palau. *Sea:* Inter-island boats are easy to find; however, sea travel from other countries to Micronesia is rare unless privately chartered.

**Language:** Micronesia has many different dialects throughout, but English is widely spoken.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** Most major credit cards, particularly Mastercard and Visa, are widely accepted and gaining popularity.

**Communications:** All of the postal service in Micronesia is under the U.S. Postal Service, and zip codes and postage rates apply. Local telephone service quality varies from place to place and long-distance, telex, telegraph and fax are usually available in the bigger cities. Rates run from around \$2.50 to \$5 per minute to places outside of Micronesia.

**Climate:** Very hot and very humid. Average daily temperatures in Palau reach to 87° and lows are around 75°. Humidity usually hits 80 percent with February and March being the driest months to visit.

**Dress:** Cotton is the way to go. Bring loose-fitting, breathable clothes that don't need to be tucked in and can be hand-washed and hung to dry without wrinkling.

**Tipping:** A tip of 10 to 15 percent is customary on Guam and the Northern Marianas. Tipping is currently catching on in Palau and Pohnpei, but is not customary anywhere else in Micronesia.

**Cuisine:** Fish reigns supreme throughout the islands of Micronesia. It is fresh, plentiful and inexpensive. Grilled tuna and reef fish are among the most popular and inexpensive meals you can find.

**Best Place to Eat:** The restaurant at the Palau Pacific Resort offers a wide variety of delicious international foods prepared by top-notch chefs.

**Special Interest:** On the island of Babelthuap, enormous stone monoliths stand with ancient faces carved in stone. This archeological site is home to over 40 of these stone giants. They are a definite must-see. While you're at it, check out some of the most breathtaking waterfalls in the same area.

**Best Night Spot:** The Pirate's Cove is both an excellent restaurant and an ultra-hot night spot. Start your evening with a great dinner, then party the night away, all in one location.

**Best Souvenir:** Palauan storyboards are the most unique and authentic souvenirs to be found anywhere. These boards, depicting local legends and ancient myths, are hand-carved by inmates in the Palauan prison. Carving sales generate money to be sent home to the inmates' families. It's an unparalleled art form in Palau, honed over many years. The longer the prisoner's sentence, the better the quality of the board.

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## Live-aboards

### Palau

Palau Aggressor II, (800) 344-5662

Peter Hughes' Sun Dancer, (800) 9-DANCER

### Truk

Truk Aggressor II, (800) 344-5662

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## Accommodations

### Kosrae

Kosrae Nautilus Resort, (011 691) 370-3567

### Palau

Caroline Cottages, (011 680) 488-3754/55

Carp Island Resort, (011 680) 488-2978

Palau Marina Hotel, (800) 247-3483

Palau Pacific Resort, (011 680) 488-2600

### Truk

Truk Continental Hotel, (800) 945-9955

Truk Stop Hotel, (011 691) 330-4232, or 330-4233

### Yap

Manta Ray Bay Hotel, (800) DIVE YAP

Pathways Hotel, (011 691) 350-3310

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## Dive Shops

### Palau

Fish 'N Fins, (800) 247-3483

Palau Diving Center, (011 680) 488-2978

Sam's Tours, (011 680) 488-1062

Splash, (800) 247-3483

### Truk

Sundance Dive Shop Truk Lagoon, (800) 424-0065

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## Wholesalers

Central Pacific Dive Expeditions, (800) U-GO-DIVE

Pactours, (800) 245-4129

Trip-n-Tour Micronesia in the U.S., (800) 348-0842;

California, (800) 843-8956; Canada, (800) 527-5228

Tropical Adventures Travel, (800) 247-3483

Waterways Travel, (800) 928-3757

Underwater Frontiers, (800) 934-8399

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## More Tourist Information

Chuuk Visitors Bureau, (011 691) 330-4133

Continental Micronesia Airlines, (800) 695-9955

Yap State Tourism Office, (011 691) 350-2298

Palau Visitors Authority, (011 680) 488-2793

Pohnpei Tourism Office, (011 691) 320-2505



# Dive Travel Planner: Baja

**Destination:** Baja California Sur—La Paz, East Cape and Cabo San Lucas

**Time Zone:** Mountain Standard Time, or PST + 1

**Airports:** San José del Cabo and La Paz Airports

**Airlines:** Alaska, Aero California, America West, Aero Mexico, United, Continental, Mexicana and Sun Trips

**Entry Regulations:** U.S. passport or proof of citizenship and return ticket, Mexican Tourist Card. Tourist cards can be obtained at any Mexican Consulate or Mexican Government Tourism Office in the U.S. and are free. There are two different types of tourist card, single and multiple entry. Both are good for up to 180 days. Single allows one entry into Mexico, the multiple allows unlimited entries within the 180 days. Two front-view photos are required for the multiple card and tourist cards must be validated by a Mexican immigration/customs official upon entry.

**Health Regulations:** Bring your sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat to guard against sunburn and sunstroke. See drinking water section for advice against intestinal disturbances.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** The currency is the peso that exchanges at U.S. \$1 = 7.41 pesos, but fluctuates frequently. U.S. currency is also widely accepted.

**Airport Fees:** There is a U.S. \$12 departure fee out of Cabo San Lucas.

**Electricity:** 120 volts, 60 cycles.

**Language:** The predominant language is Spanish; however, English is widely spoken.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** American Express, Visa, Mastercard and Diner's Club are most used.

**Communications:** Phone service is available, although it is very expensive for international calls. Postal service is also available.

**Climate:** The average annual temperature is around 75°. There are cool evenings between October and April, but late summer temps can reach up

**The 800-mile long desert peninsula of Baja California Sur—considered by many divers to be the best of the west. And the best of Baja can generally be found between Cabo San Lucas and La Paz.**

into the 90s.

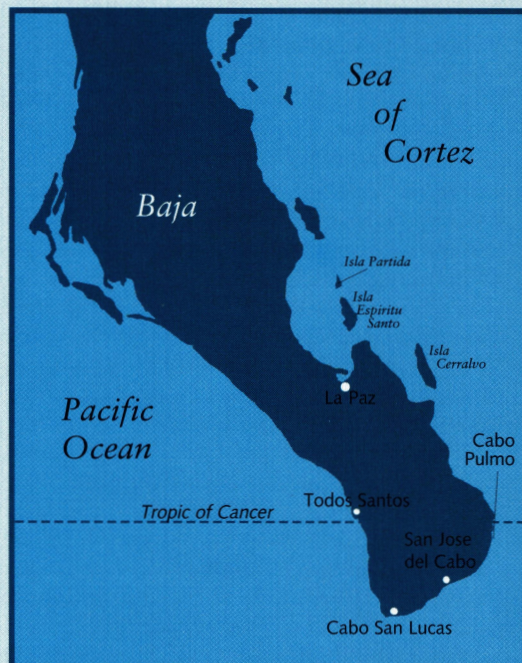
**Dress:** Casual and lightweight for warm weather.

**Tipping:** A 10 to 15 percent gratuity is generally accepted; however, taxi drivers do not accept tips unless hired by the hour.

**Cuisine:** You can find most any type of cuisine, from coffee shops to Chinese to fast food, but the local fare is strongly recommended. Steak and seafood seem to

be the main staples and there are many surf 'n turf dedicated restaurants to choose from.

**Drinking Water:** To avoid the common tourist's malady, "Montezuma's



## Dive Briefing

At or near the surface of the water, the temperature is in the low 80s, at depth, the low 70s. Visibility ranges from 40 feet during plankton bloom to 100 feet-plus. The best conditions occur from June to November. Baja diving is not the kind of coral reef diving you will find in other tropical destinations. There are no reefs to speak of and the snorkeling is poor, but the beaches and swimming are superb. All of the dive sites in the Los Cabos area are easily accessible by small boat and little time is required to reach most sites. The marine life is abundant, the guides are good, the topside activities are plentiful—this place is truly designed for vacationing.

Revenge," or the "turistas," avoid tap water, overindulgence in food, beverages and heavy exercise, and get plenty of rest. Bottled water, fruit juice, soft drinks and great beer are readily available substitutions. Also, avoid dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Best Restaurant:** Plenty of Mexican, of course, but don't miss Galeon, in

Cabo San Lucas, famous for antipasto, steaks, fish, fresh pasta and a great wine list.

**Special Interest:** There are still plenty of gringos who have come for no other reason than to party. But if you're not in the partying mood, there is plenty of shopping, museums and theaters for a good time.

**Best Night Spot:** In Cabo San Lucas it's Squid Roe, where the action happens into the wee hours of the morning. In La Paz, check out the discotheques at the Hotel Palmira and the Hotel Gran Baja. Swinging La Paz nightclubs include La Cabaña in the lobby of the Hotel Perla, and Quinto Patio near Bravo.

**Before Baja Reading:** *The Logbook from the Sea of Cortez*, by John



Steinbeck; *Tales of Power*, by Carlos Castaneda.

**On That Beautiful Baja Beach:** *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, by B. Traven; *Old Gringo*, by Carlos Fuentes.

**Baja in Brief:**

**La Paz**—La Paz is a city rich with history and culture. Once a sleepy port teeming with natural wealth undiscovered, La Paz has evolved into a bustling capital of tourism, population and productivity. The bay was originally discovered in 1533 by a Spanish expedition, but explorers were chased away by Indians shortly after landing. Later, supply problems hampered conqueror Hernán Cortés' attempts to colonize La Paz.

Throughout the 17th century, rich oyster beds and precious pearls brought fortune hunters in droves, but all attempts to establish a colony were short-lived. La Paz was finally settled in 1829. To this day it retains a touch of the sleepy, colonial atmosphere. Some businesses still observe the siesta tradition, closing their doors in the early afternoon hours. For those looking to explore top-side points of interest with an angle on Baja's past, check out these sites: Dove of Peace Monument, a large sculpture inscribed with an inspirational message:

"And if you want peace (paz), I offer it to you in the sunny peace of my bay," boat tours around beautiful Bahía de la Paz and a stroll down the historic, palm-lined waterfront row of shops along the sea wall.

**San José del Cabo**—Another quaint marriage of past and present, old and new. Settled in 1730, San José del Cabo has become known for its wealth of tropical agriculture. Coconuts, mangos, citrus fruits and spices, along with a great deal of tourist interest have created a steady growth. While in San José del Cabo, be sure to check out the Estero de San José. Bordered by groves of palm trees, the estuary of the Río San José is a protected sanctuary complete with aquatic plants and a variety of indigenous birds. Also, the Plaza Park town square is a must-see for a taste of old Mexican atmosphere. The plaza acts as centerpiece for the church, the tourism office and the ornament that makes every town square complete, a monument to General José Antonio Mijares.

**Cabo San Lucas**—Now a busy hub for fishing boats and private yachts, the bay at Cabo San Lucas was once a prime pirate hiding place. Lurking in the safety of the bay, the pirates would strike passing Spanish treasure ships during the 16th and 17th centuries. Once a quiet cannery town, Cabo San Lucas has grown into one of the most popular resort towns for tourists. If you're the kind of person who thrives on nightlife, Cabo is the place. As the natural sunlight of day sets on the water, night comes alive with an electric hiss. Strap on those *huraches* and go disco hopping along boulevards Lázaro Cárdenas and Marina. Cabo Wabo, Squid Roe and the Giggling Marlin are three favorites for a non-stop fiesta. For a little culture with your party, take a trip to the Galería El Dorado for a great collection of arts and crafts by local artists.

## Live-aboards

### La Paz

Baja Expeditions, (800) 843-6967

### Cabo San Lucas

Solmar V, (800) 344-3349; in California (310) 459-9861

## Accommodations

### La Paz

La Concha Beach Resort, (800) 999-2252, (011-52) 112-1-62-44

### East Cape

Hotel Bahía Los Frailes, (800) 762-BAJA, (011 52) 111-1-01-22

Hotel Palmas de Cortez, (800) 368-4334

Playa Del Sol, (800) 368-4334

### Cabo San Lucas

Delfin Hotels & Resorts, (800) 524-5104

Hotel Cabo San Lucas, (011-52) 114-4-00-14

Solmar Suites Resort, (800) 344-3349; in California (310) 459-9861

## Dive Shops

### La Paz

Baja Diving Services, (011-52) 112-2-18-26

Baja Expeditions Inc., (800) 843-6967, (619) 581-3311

The Cortez Club, (011-52) 112-1-61-20

### East Cape

Mr. Bills at the Hotel Palmas de Cortez, (800) 368-4334

Vista Sea Sports, (800) 368-4334

### Cabo San Lucas

Cabo Aquadeportes, (011-52) 114-3-01-17

Cabo Diving Services, (011-52) 114-3-11-09

Land's End, (800) 675-DIVE, (011-52) 114-3-22-00

Pacific Coast Adventures, (800) 491-DIVE, (011-52) 114-3-10-70

Underwater Diversions de Cabo, (800) 342-3143, (714) 970-1777

## Wholesalers

Dive Discovery, (800) 886-7321

Dive Tours, (800) 433-0885

International Diving Expeditions, (800) 934-8399

Pacific Coast Adventures, (800) 491-3483

Sun Adventures, (800) 886-9408

Tropical Adventures, (800) 247-DIVE

Underwater Frontiers, (800) 934-8399

## More Tourism Information:

### La Paz

La Paz State Tourism Office, (011 52) 112 4-0100

### East Cape

The Municipal Tourism Office in San José del Cabo is in San José's plaza park and offers tourism information and brochures on the Los Cabos area.

### Cabo San Lucas

The U.S. Consular Agent in Cabo San Lucas, (011 52) 114 3-3566



# Dive Travel Planner: Africa

## *Seychelles*

**Destination:** Seychelles

**Time Zone:** PST + 12

**Airport:** Mahe Airport

**Int'l Airlines:** Seychelles Air

**Entry Regulations:** Visas are not required to enter the Seychelles, but you must have a valid passport and a return or onward ticket.

**Health Regulations:** Yellow fever shots are required if traveling from a country or region infected with the disease. Bring plenty of mosquito repellent as the little winged ones carry malaria, and other diseases in some regions of Africa. Routine immunizations are also recommended when traveling to the Seychelles. For detailed and updated information on specific areas, contact the CDC, (404) 332-4555, and the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), (716) 754-4883.

### **Currency and Exchange Rate:**

Currency is the Seychelles Rupee (SR) and the exchange fluctuates daily. Consult any local bank for daily exchange rates.

**Airport Fees:** There is a \$20 departure tax out of the Seychelles.

**Electricity:** 220 volts, AC 50Hz and the plugs are square pin, three point.

**Language:** French and English are the two main languages spoken in the Seychelles.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** Most major credit cards accepted in most areas.

**Communications:** Telephone, telex, telegraph and radio are available 24 hours a day.

**Climate:** Tropical with temperatures in the 60s to 80s. Rainy season is generally from Nov-Feb.

**Dress:** Light and breathable cotton dresses, slacks and shorts are comfortable and appropriate for any time of day, any time of year.

**Tipping:** Tipping is not customary; hotel and restaurant tariffs usually include a service charge.

**Drinking Water:** Bottled water is available, tap water is also safe.

**East Africa—the original high adventure destination. And it's still true today, both above and below the waterline.**

**Africa's spectacular big-game safari adventures are perfectly complimented by diving trips to Pemba Island, the Seychelles, or even one of the exotic little islands off of Madagascar.**



## **Dive Briefing**

East Africa diving is Indian Ocean diving, with all the attendant species and conditions. Swift currents off the African mainland make for good drift diving and high incidence of sighting of big pelagics like mantas and whale sharks. The Seychelles, and Aldabra atoll in particular, are home to many endemic species. Visibility is excellent throughout the area, averaging 100 feet; however, localized plankton blooms and river outflow near the mainland can seriously compromise visibility. Water temperatures are consistent in the low and mid-80s. Unfortunately, many reefs near the African mainland and around Madagascar have been heavily damaged. More than 20 percent have been destroyed by dynamite fishing, coral mining and other activities.

**Live-aboards:** Fantasea Cruises, (800) 390-DIVE, fax: (310) 571-7154

**Wholesalers:** Adventure Express, (800) 29-RED SEA; Tropical Adventures Travel, (800) 247-DIVE

**Suggested Airline:** Air Seychelles, (800) 677-4277

**More Tourism Information:** Seychelles Tourist Office—New York, (212) 687-9766

## *Kenya*

**Destination:** Kenya

**Time Zone:** PST + 11 hours

**Airport:** Mombasa Airport

**From the U.S.:** There are no direct flights from the U.S. to Kenya. Most Trans-Atlantic carriers stop in Europe and the flight to Kenya departs from there. Kenya Airways runs flights from London, Paris, Frankfurt, Rome and Zurich. Other airlines serving Kenya are British Airways, Air France and Air Italia.

**Entry Regulations:** Valid passport and a Kenya visa. Applications can be obtained through a Kenyan Embassy/High Commission, Consulate or tourism office, and must be made at least 30 days before departure. Contact the Kenya Tourist



Office, California, (310) 274-6635; Director/Consul General Kenya Tourist Office/Consulate, New York, (212) 274-6635; Kenya Embassy, Washington D.C., (202) 387-6101.

**Health Regulations:** A yellow fever vaccination is strongly recommended for anyone traveling to this area. A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for those traveling from infected areas, and children of all ages (except those under the age of one) are required to have the yellow fever vaccination certificate.

Vaccinations for viral hepatitis A, meningococcal meningitis and typhoid fever are highly recommended, as well as routine immunizations including poliomyelitis booster. For detailed and updated information on specific areas, contact the CDC, (404) 332-4555, and the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), (716) 754-4883.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** The Kenyan shilling and the exchange rate is 56 K Sh = U.S. \$1.

**Airport Fees:** There is an international departure tax of U.S. \$20 or its equivalent in local currency.

**Electricity:** 220-240 volt, 50 cycle AC. Most hotels carry the appropriate adaptors.

**Domestic Transport:** *Air:* Kenya Airways daily to Mombasa, Malindi and Kisumu. Sunbird operates flights to the Masai Mara and Lamu. Charter services are among the most sophisticated in the world, companies operate from Nairobi's Wilson Airport. *Land:* Overnight Nairobi-Mombasa train service departs twice daily with first- and second-class options.

**Language:** Swahili is the official language of Kenya, but English is widely spoken and understood.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** Most major credit cards are accepted.

**Communications:** Kenya has a modern telecommunications system with international STD telephone, direct dial, telex and telefax.

**Climate:** Kenya is right on the equator but climate and temperature depend on how close you are to the sea. Coastal climates tend to be tropical, hot and humid except in July and August when things cool down and humidity subsides. Heavy rainy season is from the end of March to the end of May with intermittent bursts

while light rains occur in November and December.

**Tipping:** Hotels usually include a service charge and tipping is mostly discretionary. It is customary to tip for bar service and safari drivers/guides.

**Cuisine:** Buffet is big and the options are many. The drinks are reasonably priced and (when in season) crustacea and cold buffets are favorites.

**Super Snorkeling Spots:** Scour the teeming reefs at Mombasa National Marine Reserve.

**Wholesalers:** Adventure Express, (800) 29-RED SEA; Tropical Adventures Travel, (800) 247-DIVE

## Madagascar

**Destination:** Nosy Be, Madagascar

**Time Zone:** PST + 11

**Airport:** Fascene Airport, Nosy Be; Ivato International Airport, Antananarivo

**From the U.S.:** Air Madagascar, Air France

**Entry Regulations:** Valid passport and a Madagascar visitor's visa.

**Health Regulations:** A vaccination certificate for yellow fever is required for those traveling from infected areas, and children of all ages (except those under the age of one). Viral hepatitis A and typhoid fever vaccinations are highly recommended, along with all routine immunizations including poliomyelitis booster. For detailed and updated information on specific areas, contact the CDC, (404) 332-4555, and the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), (716) 754-4883.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** 3800 Malagasy francs (M FR) = U.S. \$1, however, this fluctuates wildly.

**Airport Fees:** There is an international departure tax, approximately U.S. \$20. Domestic departure tax is about U.S. \$4.

**Electricity:** 220 volts with French-style plugs.

**Domestic Transport:** *Air:* Air Madagascar—a special pass may be purchased which allows open travel to many destinations around Madagascar. *Land:* Rental cars are available, but it can be pricey. Train travel is available but limited.

**Language:** French and Malagasy.

**Credit Cards Accepted:** Don't count on using credit cards as they aren't generally accepted.

**Communications:** Phone service is practically nonexistent. Postal service is reliable, but slow.

**Climate:** Madagascar sits just below the equator, so it's hot and tropical. Rainy season is Dec-Feb. with the best diving climate in May-June.

**Dress:** Resort dress, strictly casual.

**Tipping:** Tipping is much appreciated.

**Cuisine:** Malagasy cuisine includes many simple rice dishes and many hotel restaurants offer seafoods.

**Best Place to Eat:** The Hotel Coco Beach has a specialty Italian restaurant with great pasta dishes.

**Special Interest:** The natural history of this entire area is of particular interest. The beauty of the beaches and rainforests provide an incredible backdrop for a world-class viewing opportunity.

**Best Night Spot:** Again we're talking outdoors. Try viewing some nocturnal lemurs. Or if nightlife is your thing, try the two weekend discos, King City and the Hotel de la Mer in Andoany.

**Dive Shops/Live-aboards:** There are two dive centers on Nosy Be that offer both day-boat and live-aboard services. *Centre Nautique*, BP 173 Nosy Be 207, Madagascar, and *Madagascar Dive Club*, 18 Cite Gallois, Andrefanambohijanahary 101.

**Accommodations:** In Nosy Be: *Hotel Les Cocotiers* and *Hotel Andilana Beach*. In Antananarivo: *Hilton Hotel* and *Hotel Colbert*.

**Wholesalers:** Cortez Travel has the corner on the market. They also serve as a small tourist office and represent Air Madagascar. Cortez Travel, 124 Lomas Santa Fe Dr., Solana Beach, CA 92075; (619) 755-5136, or (800) 854-1029.

## More Africa Tidbits

**Awesome Africa Reading** (before you go, or while you're there): *Snows of Kilimanjaro*, by Ernest Hemingway; *Out of Africa*, by Isak Dinesen; *The Hot Zone*, by Robert Preston; *The Heart of the Matter*, by Graham Greene.

**For Your Movie-going Enjoyment:** *Out of Africa*, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, *Born Free*, *A Good Man in Africa*, and many, many more.



# Dive Travel Planner: Bahamas

**Destination:** Bahamas

**Time Zone:** EST

**Airport:** Nassau

International Airport

**From the United States:**

Most major U.S. airlines run direct flights to the Bahamas from most North American gateways.

**Entry Regulations:** No visa required, U.S. citizens must show proof of citizenship—passport or birth certificate and a photo ID. Must have continuing or return tickets.

**Health Regulations:** None

**Currency & Exchange Rate:**

The Bahamian dollar (B\$1) is equivalent to the U.S. dollar. Both are accepted throughout the islands.

**Airport Fees:** There is an \$18 departure tax from Grand Bahama.

**Electricity:** 120 volts AC. Most U.S. appliances are compatible.

**Domestic Transport:** Air: Bahamas Air and Gulf Stream. Land: Local taxis are metered. Rental cars are also available, but make reservations in advance. A valid U.S. drivers license allows you to drive for up to three months per visit.

**Language:** English

**Credit Cards Accepted:** All

**Communications:** Direct-dial telephone service. AT&T offers direct USA service for collect and credit card calls. To reach an AT&T operator, dial (800) 872-2881. Most hotels have satellite television.

**Climate:** The best time of year in the Bahamas is September through May when temperatures average 70°-75°. The rest of the year temperatures reach into the mid-80s. Tradewinds make the weather comfortable all year.

**Dress:** Light and informal. Beachwear is considered inappropriate on the streets of downtown Nassau, in churches, restaurants and casinos.

**Tipping:** Same as the U.S.

**Drinking Water:** Bottled water is advised as fresh water is limited.

**Cuisine:** It is recommended that you

The islands of the Bahamas include 29 major islands and 661 cays scattered over 100,000 square miles of Atlantic Ocean. Excellent diving is found throughout the islands. The majority of the blue holes discussed in our feature "Lusca's Lair" are in and around South Andros Island.



try Bahamian fare including various seafood dishes and bread pudding. **Best Place to Eat:** Hands-down, the restaurant at Compass Point Resort for nouvelle Caribbean cuisine. Best place to celebrate a birthday—owned

## Dive Briefing

The Bahamas lie in the Gulf Stream, a major ocean current bringing warm, clear waters from the south. Seas are calmest in the summer months—May through September—except when the occasional hurricane drifts up from the Caribbean or the western Atlantic. In summer, water temperatures are in the low 80s, and air temperatures in the 80s and 90s. In winter, water temperatures drop into the low and middle 70s, and air temperatures to the mid 70s and low 80s, down into the 60s at night. Visibility is good year-round, averaging 80-100 feet and frequently exceeding 100 feet. Due to its unique geological history, diving in the Bahamas is predominantly wall-diving.

by Chris Blackwell, ex-producer for Bob Marley. For a quiet moment, check out the bar at the Orange Hill Hotel in Nassau.

**Special Interest:** Rent a car and tour the beauties of Nassau, or check out the mondo aquarium at the Atlantis Hotel. It's said to be the largest aquarium in a hotel in the world, complete with tiger sharks and rays.

**Best Night Spot:** The three-story disco, The Zoo, is the hottest spot for a hot Bahamian night on Nassau.

**Live-aboards:** The *M/V Ballymena* from Out Island Voyages, (800) 241-4591, runs trips through the Out Islands of the Bahamas. Another good choice is Bottom Time Adventures, running the *Bottom Time II*: (800) 234-8464

**Dive Shops:** Divers Down (809) 365-8465; Unexso (800) 992-DIVE; Valentines Dive Center (800) 383-6480.

**Wholesalers:** Landfall, (800) 525-3833; Underwater Frontiers, (800) 934-8399; Sportours, (800) 660-2754.

**Accommodations:** Clarion Atlantik Beach Lucaya Golf & Country (800) 622-6770; The Villas On Coral Island (800) 328-8814; Valentine's Dive Center (800) 383-6480.



**Before-Traveling Entertainment:** *Diving and Snorkeling Guide to the Bahamas Family Islands and Grand Bahama*, Second Edition, by Bob and Charlotte Keller. Bone up on the Bahamas and go for a James Bond extravaganza: *Thunderball*, *Never Say Never* and *For Your Eyes Only*. Not a James Bond fan? Try *Cocoon*, *Splash*, *Jaws IV*, or re-runs of *Flipper*. All were filmed you know where.

**Best Bahamas Beach Reading:** *The Old Man and the Sea* and/or *Islands in the Stream*, both by Ernest Hemingway.

**Bahamas in Brief:**

**Abaco**—There are two islands, Great Abaco and Little Abaco, and limitless cays in the area. Dive awesome sites like the Towers, the wreck of the Adirondack and Grouper Alley for fantastic coral formations, a wonderful wooden Union Civil War wreck and a photographers' dream packed with large fish and other sea creatures. And here's a bit of cool Bahamian trivia: It is estimated that some of the islands in the Bahamas are made up of 20,000-foot thick layers of coral built up over hundreds of years.

**Andros**—May be one of the most unexplored of the islands as far as diving is concerned. The Bahamians call it the Sleeping Giant. Andros is just over 100 miles long and along its eastern shore lies one of the least-explored barrier reefs anywhere. The eastern shore also lies along the Tongue-of-the-Ocean, a submarine trench that drops to over 6,000 feet. If wall great diving is what you seek, Andros is the place. Killer dive sites include: Marion, the Ocean Blue Hole, the Wall Dive, the Lady Moore and Conch Alley.

**Berry Islands**—Also perched on the edge of the Tongue-of-the-Ocean, the Berry Islands, made up of about 30 cays, were once the Bahamas' best kept secret—great fishing and even better diving. In the 1930s the islands were developed and sold to individuals, many of the islands are still privately owned. There are still no commercially available flights to the Berry Islands, but charter service is available from Nassau, Miami and Ft. Lauderdale. Diving around Chub Cay, formerly a private island for wealthy club members, is now open to the public and considered among the best in the Bahamas. Mama Rhoda Rock and Chub Cay Wall will dazzle any diver.

**Bimini**—The closest of the islands to the U.S. mainland, Bimini is a mere 42 miles east of Miami. This tiny island was originally made famous by Ernest Hemingway who came here in the 1930s to dangle his line for big game. Bimini, with its position squarely in the flow of the gulf stream, does have excellent fishing and boasts many trophy records, as well as some of the clearest waters in the islands that make for excellent diving as well. The ceaseless gulf stream flow provides dependable current for drift diving here and the area has become a favorite stopover for bahamian Live-aboards.

**Crooked Islands and the Acklins**—This group of islands is appropriately named—viewed from the air they look a lot like a seahorse. The diving? Again, wall diving reigns supreme. Take a trip to visit Grandpa Grouper between wall dives—perhaps you'll have a chance to get up close with this 300-pound grouper who's practically domesticated.

**Eleuthera**—Best known for its three-mile, pink sand beach and as the historical hot bed of the Bahamas. The diving is

hot. Dive the Current Cut, Train Wreck, the Plateau and the Grotto. Eleuthera is a great spot to explore newly discovered dive sites where nudibranchs, flamingo tongues, sleeping sharks and lettuce slugs are common attractions.

**Exuma**—This island is most known as the host island for the annual Family Island Regatta. Each year a flood of local Bahamians and tourists descends upon Exuma to see Bahamian working boats race in Elizabeth Harbour. Exuma is also home to some excellent dive sites like Sting Ray Reef, Angelfish Blue Hole. Schools of French Angels, spiny lobsters and squirrelfish are common residents of Exuma waters.

**Grand Bahama**—Elkhorn coral, schools of countless small and medium-sized reef fish and fascinating varieties of sponges are just a few creatures to see in the waters of Grand Bahama. Visit Theo's Wreck, Shark Junction, Pillar Castle and Dolphin Dive as some of the most popular dive sites in this area.

**Long Island**—This island is generally a few degrees warmer in the winter months than any of the other islands, but the tradewinds serve as an omnipresent natural air conditioner. Grouper Valleys, Flamingo Reef, Stella Maris, Shark Reef and Conception Island are great sites for whitetip sharks, brain coral and fantastic night diving.

**San Salvador**—Tube sponges, fan coral, coral shrimp and the notorious fire coral are standard residents of San Salvadoran waters. Dive the Telephone Pole and the famous Great Cut wall dive for schools of Bermuda chubs and midnight parrotfish.

~~~~~

## Myth and Legend Abound

After reading the feature story, "The Legend of Lusca's Lair," it's clear that optimum diving is not the only draw to the islands. The blue holes of the Bahamas are steeped in an ominous brew of local superstition. Topside, legends abound. Gather round and listen to the mysterious, mythological story of the chicharnies. The popular myth of these wee, yet vicious, elves with glowing crimson eyes and pointy beards, is believed to originate in the oral tradition of the Seminole Indians who settled at Red Bay.

The tiny troublemakers supposedly hung from the gnarly limbs of pine trees by their three fingers wreaking havoc on the unwary inhabitants of the Andros Island. The contemporary explanation of this evil-elf phenomenon is that what the locals perceived to be elves were actually giant barn owls, now extinct, that are said to bear a striking resemblance to humans.

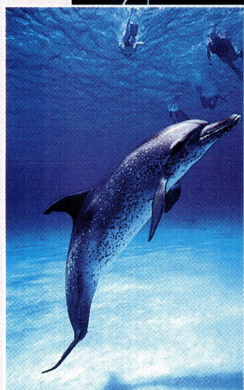
Upon their discovery, blue holes, too, were immediately submerged in a thick fog of mystery and intrigue, the perfect breeding ground for superstition.

If you'd like to explore these blue holes, contact:  
Blue Holes Foundation, Nassau, (809) 362-2403  
MV Ballymena, Nassau, (800) 241-4591  
Bahamas Divers, Nassau, (800) 398-DIVE  
Valentine's Dive Center, (800) 383-6480  
Harbour Island, (800) 383-6480  
Unexo, (800) 992-DIVE  
Small Hope Bay Lodge, Andros, (800) 223-6961  
Ocean Explorer, Miami, FL, (800) 338-9383

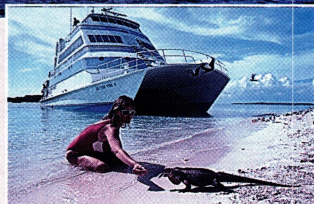


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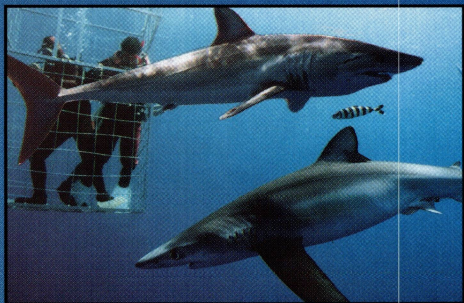
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The atmosphere at Scuba Outpost supports learning and exploration. It's an environment in which divers can expand their scuba skills, from getting a basic or advanced certification to fish ecology classes and buoyancy clinics. Professional level courses are offered every other weekend or once a month, including rescue and divemaster certification, and instructor and medic courses. There is a special effort, according to Fichman, "to help people perfect their skills in an atmosphere of compassion."

If the idea of hauling equipment for all this diving overwhelms you, rest easy. Not only does the staff of Scuba Outpost carry your equipment every inch of the way to the water or the boat, they also state that a visitor can arrive with "nothing more than a bathing suit," and have all equipment provided. It's just a small part of the incredible service this multilingual international staff provides. (You can chat it up in seven different languages if you have the urge.)

Other water-based activities include kayaking—an intimate vehicle for exploring the deserted coves along the shoreline from water level, observing cormorants, gulls and guillemots. With a bit of orientation, guests can even scuba dive from special dive-outfitted kayaks. Family members who prefer a drier activity can tromp



*Amble out along the pier, and dangle your feet over the end—it's a great sunset viewing spot.*



*Learn to dive from a kayak, or just paddle along the shoreline for an up-close view of the gulls and guillemots.*

along miles of rugged coastline, or through the hills of Catalina Island's west end. Watch for fox, deer and wild boar in this undisturbed habitat.

Back at the Outpost, dinner, served in the spacious main hall with its fireplace and view of Emerald Bay, earns kudos from guests (as do the rest of the meals). Usually it's a hearty main course



*In these rustic cabins (above), you can smell the salty tang of the sea and hear the lap of the wavelets in the cove, dreaming of your dive that day (below).*



supplemented by salads, vegetables, bread and dessert. Plenty to satisfy a salt-air-induced appetite, with vegetarian meals provided on request.

"Scuba Outpost is more than just a business venture," says Fichman, "It's an absolutely important aspect of the Outpost that every person leaves happy and content. We create friends here at Scuba Outpost."

Clearly Scuba Outpost occupies a setting that's simple and comfortable, yet spares no effort at providing service that ranks it among the best anywhere. All of this leaves plenty of room for what most visitors come for—a place for adventure in the natural world. Two years ago, this combination of adventure and service didn't exist on Catalina Island. Thank goodness, someone saw that it was necessary to invent it.

## SCUBA OUTPOST

**Phone:** (800) 896-2239

**Fax:** (310) 574-8114

**Email:** Scubapost@aol.com

**Web-site:** <http://www.scubapost.com>

**Accommodations:** 17 cabins for 140 guests

**Prices:** 2 nights/3 days, all-inclusive: \$245 a/c: no

**Restaurant:** central dining hall

**Pool:** no

**Water temperature:** 60–72°

**Boats:** two: (a) 50-foot transport/dive carries 56 passengers; (b) 18-foot inflatable

**Number of dives per day:** two boat dives, unlimited shore dives

**Night dives:** yes

**Oxygen on board:** yes, oxygen-trained crew

**Radio on board:** yes

**Nearest medical personnel:** Four miles

**Nearest recompression chamber:** 4 miles

**Rental equipment:** all equipment inc.

**Photo equipment:** yes

**Certification classes:** yes

**Certifying agencies:** PADI

**Specialty classes:** snorkeling; open

water—\$120; advanced—\$20;

rescue—\$60; buoyancy clinic—\$40;

divemaster—\$100; instructor—\$995

**Number of instructors:** 14, speaking seven languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Hebrew, Japanese)



# Scuba Outpost

by Spike Allen

*With the perfect marriage of pristine nature and world-class service, this spot is a little slice of heaven right on Catalina Island...*

**T**he great French philosopher and poet, Voltaire, once said, "If God did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent him." After experiencing Scuba Outpost on Catalina Island in California, one wonders about a similar relationship between the resort and the landscape. The tie is so integral, and the Outpost so linked to the natural world, perhaps it was simply necessary to invent...well, perhaps....

Perched on a hillside above the crescent arm of Emerald Bay on Catalina's west end, the Scuba Outpost allows visitors a chance to experience many facets of a California regional landscape they completely miss on the mainland. For divers, the opportunity is even more fantastic; in addition to the voluptuous beauty of the underwater world which is so accessible here just a stone's throw from the resort, it also brings an exceptional level of excellence and diversity to the dive experience. "We are not just close to nature here," says Director of Operations Leon Fichman. "We are part of it."

Most importantly, in this rustic setting, the staff of Scuba Outpost demonstrates a commitment to

personalized service usually found only at the most luxurious resorts. From carrying your bags to the van that delivers you to the resort and huffing your scuba equipment to the water, to the brownies and milk they deliver to your quarters at bedtime, the impeccable service bespeaks a true sense of human caring.

With an overall character that's simple and unpretentious, the 17 cabins—some just a few steps from the water—accommodate up to 140 guests. The sleeping arrangements are bunk-house style with a locker, reading light and electrical outlet for each bed. But someone preserved a sense of humor throughout, providing the cabins with small signs labeling them the Sheraton, the Waldorf, the Ritz. Guests use the private and semi-private showers and restrooms close by. If all

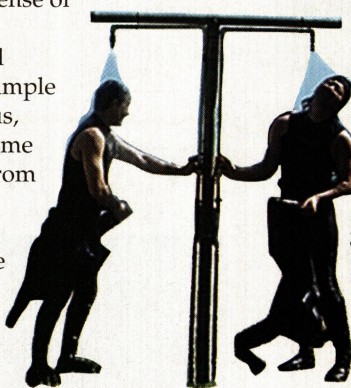


*The inviting waters of Doctors Cove are just a stone's throw from the Outpost's cozy cabins.*

this sounds like summer camp, that's because it was and is; the grounds are leased from an organization that reserves it for limited seasonal use. Lest this sound oppressively Spartan, be assured that Scuba Outpost more than makes up for the casual accommodations with service worthy of a world-class hotel, and access to spectacular diving.

In Emerald Bay itself, the gem-like color of the water reflects depths of about 25 feet. Doctors Cove, the small circle of water just at the resort's front porch, starts at 15 or 20 feet and drops, farther out, to 100 feet. Close in, snorkelers will feel at home; the water's typically so calm, it's almost like floating in an aquarium. Underwater photographers find the serene waters an ideal shutterbugging zone. Unlimited beach diving opens the waters just beyond for divers to explore the nearby marine reserve. The water temperature ranges from 60° in the winter to a summer high of about 72°, while the visibility is typically between 40 and 100 feet—a boon to divers accustomed to the Golden State's mainland beach-access sites that may hit 20 feet visibility on a good day.

Boat dives are offered twice daily—after breakfast and lunch. Within two miles of the Scuba Outpost dock, more than 35 sites represent a menu of the finest diving Catalina has to offer, from absolute beginner spots to challenging sites rated among the most exciting in California.



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*Pemba, continued from page 57*  
 ger head, leatherback, hawkbill and green—have nesting grounds. While humpback, spinner, bottlenose and commn dolphins are also seen.

You just know there are plenty of fish around when you see the many fishing boats on the lee side of the island. Slow development in Pemba style has also meant holding onto traditional fishing approaches—they haven't opted for dynamite, but are still fishing from small canoes with a basic rod and reel. Due to difficult winds and a lack of appropriate places to drop anchor, Pemba has not been a popular dock for the captains of big freighters. This has translated to less reef damage and more fish, as well as plenty of new places to explore for the diver.

On land, Pemba also has attractions for the intrepid visitor. This island, which gained its independence from

**The currents flowing through the reef around Pemba bring out wild scenes—slowly winging creatures at Manta Point, or barracudas at the Uvinji Gap, waiting patiently with their mouths open for anything tasty**

Britain in 1964, has historical artifacts dating back centuries—a complex cultural heritage that weaves together European and north African history. At Chwaka for example, stone houses and

tombs surround the ruins of a 15th century mosque. Prince Harouni who is buried here, was a descendant of a cruel Persian ruler Pujuni who held Pemba in an iron fist until he was assassinated by the Portuguese in the 1500s.

Also known as Clove Island, the pungent spice has been Pemba's major export and source of income for decades. An

essential oil distillery erected in 1982, extracts the oil from the cloves as well as from cinnamon and lemon grass, and ships the products to Zanzibar Town for export.

But for divers the main event is indubitably below the surface. While the currents that repelled large shipping activity attract multitudes of fish, they also mean strongly varying visibility. As

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along the rest of the African (and most continental) coasts, visibility is rarely optimal. But on Pemba, the dive sites are all relatively close to shore, simple to then drop off into one of the many gaps, and if visibility is difficult, return to the beach in a hurry.

Several dive wholesalers offer a handful of options for seeing the sights—and the sites—of Pemba. Land-based choices include Manta Reef Camp, 15 cottages on a hilltop overlooking the sea just 15 minutes by boat from Manta Point. To the north, camp visitors can explore an old lighthouse (circa 1900) whose cast-iron sections were transported to the inaccessible point by landing barge. For residents of Manta Reef camp, a traditional Arabic dhow is the dive boat of choice, ferrying divers out to the sites formerly only accessible by live-aboard. For those who prefer to dangle their toes over the side into the tepid (mid-80's) Indian Ocean at any time of day or night, check the live-aboard situation: a flotilla of yachts, plus a dhow. The yachts typically accommodate from 16 to 20 divers in comfort, and offer all the amenities of luxury diving.

The best time to explore Pemba is between August and May, although experienced Africa hands recommend September through March, and say to avoid July and August when the weather can be quite rainy. Whichever options you finally select, an underwater safari is an obvious add-on to any African trip.

And above all, heed that sage advice, "Never try to change Africa." The face it offers—by turns wild, spare, resplendent with color and motion—it is always magnificent. And it is, in the end, always Africa. 

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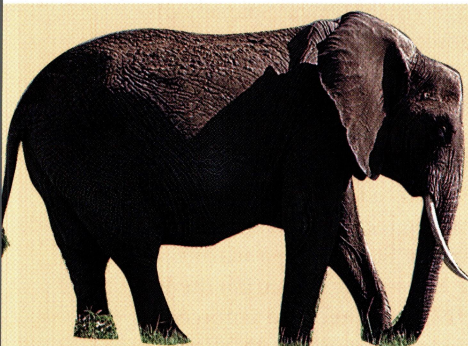
*Featured in National Geographic March, 1995*

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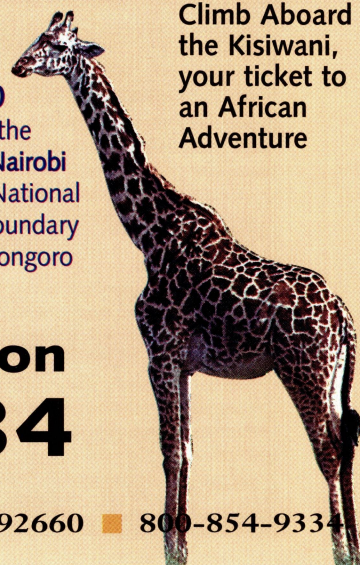


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*Emerald Sea, continued from page 70*

guaranteed on a kelp-covered, open-water seamount known as Hunt Rock. In about 60 feet of water, you'll find Hunter and Huntress, two of the most sociable wolf eels on the West Coast. Despite their undeservedly ferocious reputation, these six-foot long, muppet-faced ambassadors entertain divers with their playful antics and sociable behavior. Breathtaking encounters with giant Pacific octopus, the largest octopus in the world, are also relatively common here, as they are just about everywhere in the emerald sea.

Queen Charlotte Strait is constantly yielding new discoveries. At the south end of Ripple Passage, in 100 feet of water, you'll come across a small ravine of eight-inch pink and white gorgonian corals. Previously unreported in British Columbian waters, this elegant species of coral

**Wild, staggeringly  
beautiful and always  
mystifying,  
British Columbia's  
ocean epitomizes  
high adventure  
diving**

has been identified as *Calciorgia spiculifera*. Sparsely distributed, these fragile gorgonians are known to occur in only three areas along the B.C. coast.

Revelations such as these are becoming common as more and more sport divers fan out to explore Queen Charlotte's remote underwater wilderness. Though no official protection has been granted by federal or provincial governments, all the local dive charter operators consider Queen Charlotte Strait to be a marine park. Spearfishing and the harvesting of marine life by recreational divers is strictly prohibited and enforced by every operator. Consequently, the dive sites display no signs of depletion or abuse.

Wild, staggeringly beautiful and always mystifying, British Columbia's ocean epitomizes high adventure diving and still manages to be user-friendly. A frontier where intrepid divers can find the rare and exotic and maybe even the unknown—it's all there, in the waters of the emerald sea.



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# ◀ ◀ ◀ ◀ INFORMATION GALORE

Look to the left! Circle those goodies of interest, lick a stamp, and presto! FREE INFORMATION!

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# Tobago

**COME DIVE RIGHT IN!**

**T**obago is the most southerly island of the Caribbean chain of islands. ■ Located 21 miles northeast of its sister isle, Trinidad, it is 26 miles long and 7 miles wide and has a population of approximately 46,000. ■ The island, though quiet and laid-back, is blessed with natural beauty. ■



There are many attractions: palm-fringed beaches, rustic fishing villages and secluded bays and coves, an abundance of marine life, wildlife, rich flora and fauna due to its proximity to the South American coast as well as tempting coral reefs. ■ On this gem of an isle, one can find the oldest rainforest, 17,000 acres protected by law since 1776. ■



Tobago has a broad range of highlights to offer the diver. ■ Giant manta rays and leatherback turtles, beautiful angelfish and tarpons...it's all here. ■ The richness of species continues topside. ■ Waterfalls and bird sanctuaries are the perfect addition to any dive vacation. ■ Just pick one of our many diver-friendly hotels

## **Blue Waters Inn/ Aquamarine Dive**

Come experience the dive trip of a lifetime. Our 38 room beachfront resort hotel set amongst 46 acres of lush tropical grounds, directly on the beach. Our PADI International Resort and Training Facility, and our recently completed dive shop and private pier.

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**Fax: 809-660-5195**

**Toll Free: 800-742-4276,  
800-327-6709**

## **Manta Lodge/Tobago Dive Experience**

Manta Lodge, one of Tobago's newest hotels, houses the largest dive operation on the island, Tobago Dive Experience. At this 22 room hotel which overlooks the untouched bay of Speyside, certified instructors provide friendly and professional PADI and NAUI courses, from Open Water to Assistant Instructor. Tobago and the clear Speyside waters are considered the home of the Manta Ray, as one of the few locations in the world where mantas are sighted regularly. The reefs in the area provide a gentle introduction for the first-timer or a more challenging dive for the experienced diver. Japanese Gardens, Manta Bowl, Shark Bank, Heart Attack Alley—there is something for everyone. We have truly captured the essence that is Tobago!

**Call: 809-660-5268/Fax: 809-660-5030  
(800) 544-7631**

## **Ocean Point Inn**

### **A Dedicated Diver's Inn:**

- Self-contained studios & suites
- Swimming pool & hammocks in patio
- Poolside-dining & cocktail bar
- Complete & quiet with an informal, happy atmosphere
- We go overboard for divers!

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**Fax: 909-279-0478**

**E-Mail: scubavoy@ixnetcom.com**

## **RexTurtle Beach**

More than just a dive holiday...set in natural tropical gardens, directly on a mile of unspoiled beach, where turtles lay their eggs, pelicans dive for fish and iguanas roam free. ■ 125 a/c-rooms - all with seaviews

- Scuba diving & water sports
- Cultural entertainment
- Floodlit tennis courts/swimming pool
- En suite bathrooms/family rooms

**Call: 800-255-5859**

*Baja, continued from page 65*

Partida and Espiritu islands, about 18 miles north of La Paz harbor, each enclose numerous small coves, bays and reefs. The undersea topography is rocky, covered with boulders interspersed with sandy areas. Clear water bustles with marine life. Large schools of fish frequent the deeper water and sporadic growths of coral are scattered across the sea floor. Morays, tropical fish and garden eels inhabit this zone. Be forewarned, there are many sites in these islands; don't expect to do it in a day or even in a single trip.

Los Islotes, the most popular site, is only 800 feet north of Partida Island. Steep rock monoliths gradually descend into the water. Beneath the surface, close to the rocks, fish populate the crevices. Look for sergeant majors, damselfish, angelfish, surgeonfish, parrotfish and snappers. At times, mantas and sharks cruise by, especially at the north end of the islets. The most popular attraction at Los Islotes is the colony of sea lions inhabiting the southern shore. These playful creatures fill the sea, seemingly fearless, approaching divers without hesitation.

Perhaps the most famous site in the La Paz area is the El Bajo seamount. This submerged collection of pinnacles, 10 miles northeast of Los Islotes, is famous for its large populations of pelagic fish—hammerheads, black tip, silver tip and tiger sharks, corvina, jacks, marlin, dorado and the most exciting visitors, the mantas and whale sharks.

El Bajo's three large pinnacles come to within 80, 50 and 60 feet of the surface respectively. The bottom drops quickly to over 100 feet, and within a half mile to over 1800 feet. Under these conditions computers and attention to bottom time are a necessity. Late summer and early fall are the best times to dive this area. With a little luck and good timing, El Bajo can be the most exciting place you have ever dived, but it is an open ocean site and definitely not for novices.

The La Paz area offers an opportunity to dive an exciting location that is close to home, easy to access and not too expensive. Divers of every level of experience can enjoy this region. Plan a week or more in La Paz and take full advantage of what the Baja, above and below water, has to offer. 🐟





*Mambo*, continued from page 65  
cals—you drank Tequila and  
cervesa and listened to local music.  
You got drunk and you payed the  
price with a hangover the next day.  
And I doubt if it ever occurred to  
Pleasant Senior to apologize for  
what he considered these accept-  
able even necessary departures  
from sanity.

His returns were much anticipat-  
ed. What would he pull out of the  
trunk this time? On previous trips  
he'd brought us brightly painted  
Mexican toys, ornate sombreros  
and tooled leather belts with silver  
buckles. We could hardly imagine  
what other wonders such a place  
might produce. After the trip  
where he and Carlos got the trophy  
black marlin, Pleasant Senior

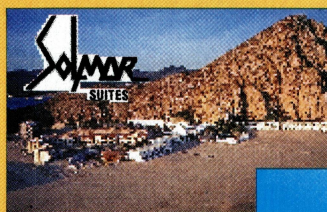
***I opened it to  
discover the  
marlin's bill, fully  
three feet  
long and  
emanating a  
smell so  
profound it could  
only have been  
generated in a  
place as  
wonderful as  
Mexico.***

pulled out a cylindrical object  
wrapped in newspaper and handed  
it to me. I opened it to discover the  
marlin's bill, fully three feet long  
and emanating a smell so profound  
it could only have been generated  
in a place as wonderful as Mexico.

When we got inside the house he  
carefully removed a 78 rpm record-  
ing from his bag, placed it on the  
record player and gently set needle  
to vinyl. Out came the Latin sounds  
of an unknown band led by an un-  
heard of band leader named Perez  
Prado. And so it happened on that  
sunny mid-winter afternoon that I  
got to get up close and personal  
with a stinking marlin spike and  
listen to the strains of the first  
Mambo music ever played in  
Upper California. 🐟



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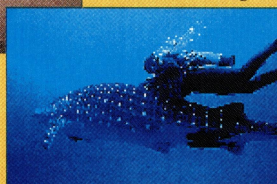


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*Micronesia, continued from page 86*

Watch for puffers in a variety of designs and sizes, turtles, and a host of dozing tropical fishes.

Inside the lagoon, there are numerous dive sites that experience little or no current. At Clam City, a popular spot off Baulus Island, hundreds of large tridacna clams crowd together in the shallows, their mantles rivaling a psychedelic poster for pattern and color. In addition to the clams, there is a massive coral head in 20 feet of water, aptly named Lionfish Rock. During the day, six to eight volitan lionfish and smaller clearfin and spotfin lionfishes hide in the small caves and tunnels inside the coral mound. At night, the lionfish prefer the two- to four-foot depths on the sand bottom, just off the beach.

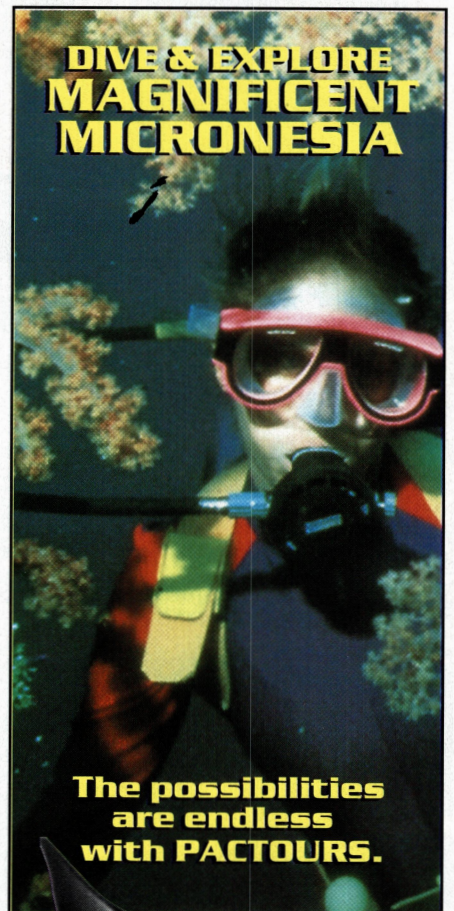
Then there is Jellyfish Lake, a land-locked saltwater lake located in the middle of Eil Malik Island, about 30 minutes from Koror. Here, clouds of harmless mastigias jellyfish, ranging in diameter from the size of a dime to eight inches, envelop snorkelers. Many trips offer the snorkel site as an add-on, or as a standard attraction on week-long live-aboard trips. Reaching the lake requires a 15-minute hike through a jungle straight out of Jurassic Park and over a 100-foot high ridge, but is well worth the effort.

For another unusual option, check out Chandelier Cave beneath the island of Ngarol, only a short boat ride from Koror.

A ten-foot wide tunnel provides entrance to the cave system. Three separate chambers extend nearly 400 feet beneath the island at a maximum depth of 50 feet, with air pockets in each chamber. Inside the caverns, massive limestone stalactites drop from the ceiling and delicate calcite crystals sparkle in the dive light.

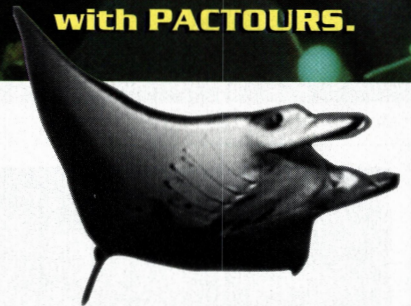
As you can see it's not all walls at Palau, which also has several interesting wreck dives. Within the lagoon, look for Helmet Wreck and the IRO. A small unidentified freighter, Helmet Wreck earned its name because a large portion of the cargo included a stock pile of helmets. In the forward compartments, aircraft parts, gas masks, machine guns and other detritus of war gathers the silt of years. The IRO is a 470-foot Japanese tanker sitting upright in 110 feet of water. Hard and soft corals quilt much of the ship. Mussels, fluted oysters and red encrusting sponges dot the wreck's surface.

With an excellent variety of world-class diving, Palau certainly ranks among the best destinations in the South Pacific, placing it solidly with the best in the world. More exciting sites are being discovered all the time. If you are looking for beautiful, unusual and exciting experiences, then Palau should be next on your list. And when you're there, be sure to let the Palauans know you hope they're taking the necessary measures to preserve Palau's natural beauty for the future.



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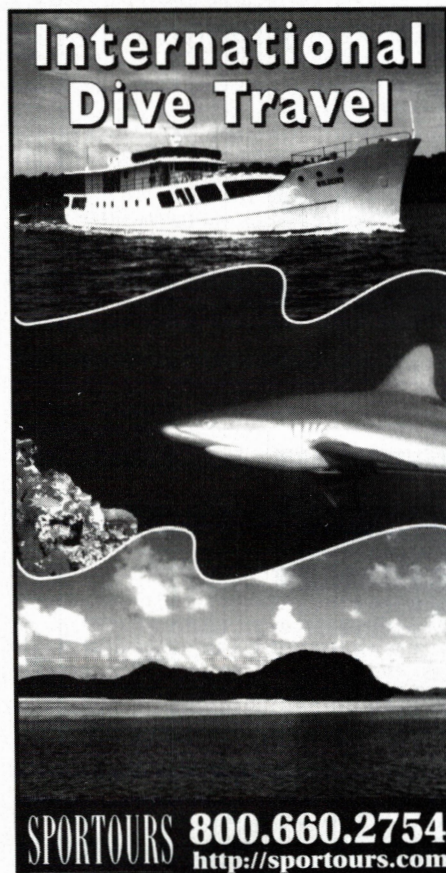


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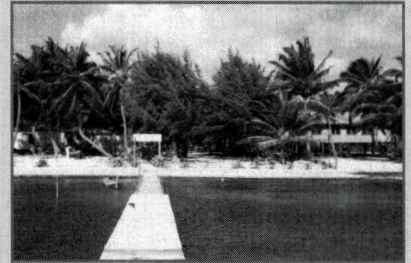
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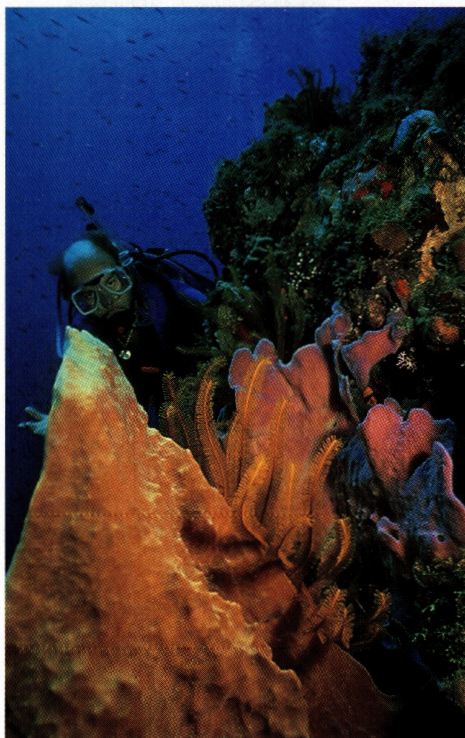


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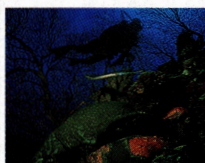
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# The Ultimate Guide To Australian Diving



**T**his guide is designed to be a reference for selecting a dive operator and taking a dive vacation in Australia. Four major destinations in Australia are listed: Port Douglas, Cairns, Townsville and Airlie Beach—gateway to the Whitsundays. Each one is a jumping off area to a section of the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea. Each destination has its unique attractions and interests for divers, catering to a wide variety of tastes and desires.

**Port Douglas** is closest to the Great Barrier Reef. Here life is slow and laid back. If you seek refuge from the rat race and want to dive at your own pace, Port Douglas is for you. (see pages 2-3)

**Cairns** is a bustling city, diverse in culture and interests. Cairns attracts people from all over the world to enjoy its many wilderness attractions.

It is the mecca for day trips and live-aboard diving to the Barrier Reef and Coral Sea. (see page 5)

**Townsville** is Australia's largest tropical city and one of its largest seaports. This metropolis of 96,000 is home to a number of live-aboard dive boats and day boats to the Great Barrier Reef. Townsville's top diving attraction is the wreck of the SS *Yongala*, a coastal steamship lost in a cyclone in 1911. The *Yongala* is considered one of the best wreck dives in the world.

**Airlie Beach**, gateway to the Whitsundays, is one of the most beautiful little beach towns in Australia. Hamilton Island, Heron Island and Lady Elliot island can all be accessed from here. Airlie beach is home to many day trip dive operators serving world-famous sites such as Bait Reef, as well as live-aboards

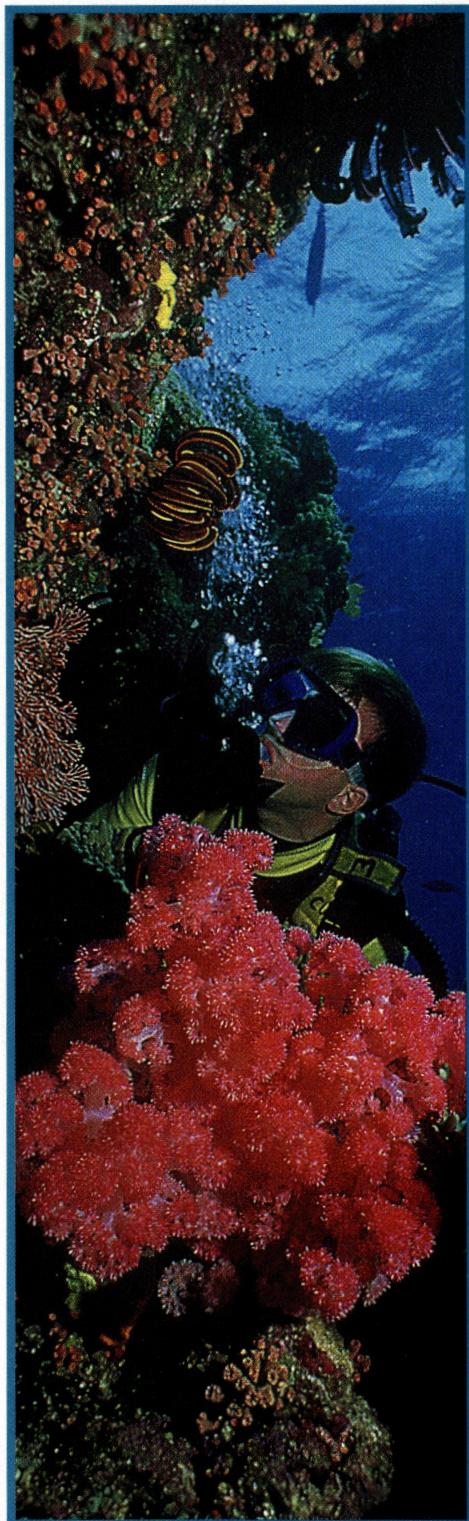
to the Great Barrier Reef and the farthest reaches of the Coral Sea. Airlie Beach is truly Australia's best kept secret. (see page 4)

Australia offers something for everyone. For hard core divers a live-aboard is one of the best ways to explore the reefs. Divers can choose from budget boats to luxury liners, 21 day trips to 2-3 day trips. (see page 6-7)

Day boats are a popular alternative for divers who don't care for the live-aboard life. Most day-trip operators can offer a family or a mixed diver/non-diver group more flexibility in planning your holiday. Whatever your needs or desires, the dive operators in these pages are here to help you. For more information call or fax them direct. And happy diving!



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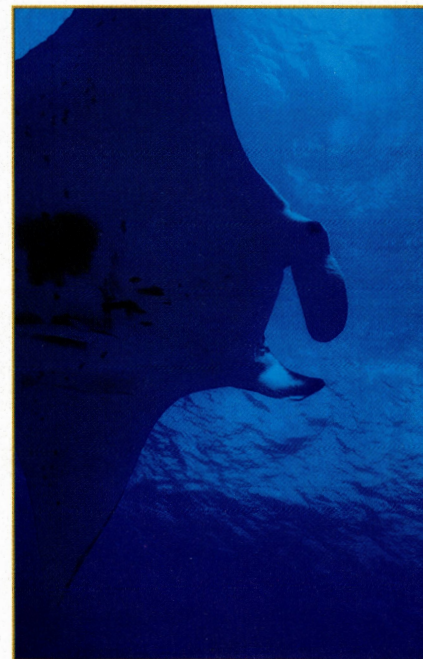
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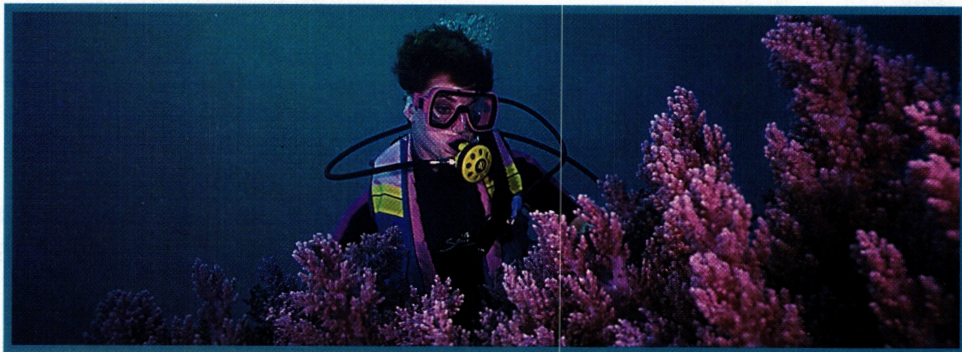
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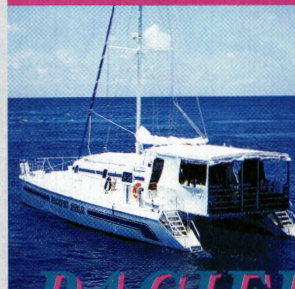
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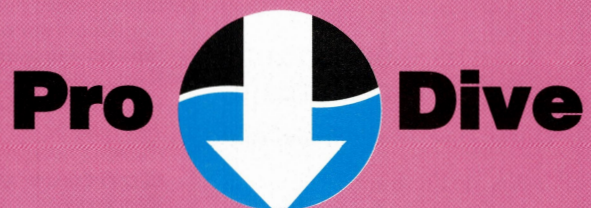
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**Fax: 011-61-70-31-2739**



## Pro Dive Cairns:

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**Call: 011-61-70-31-5255**

**Fax: 011-61-70-51-9955**



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Queensland 4879

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**Fax: 011-61-70-591-614**



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**Internet: <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~divecdc>**

**Fax: 011-61-70-51-7531**



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**E-Mail: [dudive@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dudive@ozemail.com.au)**

**Fax: 011-61-70-311-373**



# DIVE TRAVEL CLASSIFIEDS

## - TRAVEL -

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Email [adventure@adventures.com.au](mailto:adventure@adventures.com.au)

### Canada

#### Misty Isle Divers, Q.C.I.

Dive the Pristine Waters of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Explore Reefs and Walls Alive with Colour. Full PADI Dive Center, Day Charters. View Eagles and Haida Villages. 800-665-0555 Fax: 604-557-4262.

#### Lady Goodiver

Dive BC's Best Aboard the 110 ft MV Lady Goodiver-Your Home Away from Home! Comfortable and Spacious Live-aboard Charters for 8-12 Guests along Beautiful British Columbia's Coast. Customer Satisfaction and Safety are #1. Phone/Fax: 604-931-6584. Cellular: 604-220-7187. <http://www.3routes.com/scuba/L.G.DIVER.html>

### Caribbean

#### Valentine's Dive Center-Bahamas

Big Island Equipped, Out Island Service and Charm. Full-service Shop, One Day Resort Class Through Divemaster in SSI or PADI. Rental, Retail, Wreck Specialists, Night Dive on Request. True Cavern and Cave. Over 30 Dive Sites. 2 Restaurants, 2 Bars, 26 Rooms, Fresh Water Pool and Hot Tub. 800-383-6480.

#### At Home In Cozumel-Cozumel

Cozumel/Ambergris Caye/ Isla Mujeres/ Playa Del Carmen Beach Homes. Cozumel 1-11 Bdrms. Houses in town 1-4 Bdrms. Ambergris: 1-5 Bdrms. Isla: 1-3 Bdrms. Hotels too (only on Isla). Playa Del Carmen 1-4 Bdrms. Phone 800-833-3971 or 212-254-5623 Fax 212-979-2993.

<http://www.pope.com/travelex/cozumel.htm>

#### Fiesta Inn/Marine Sports-Cozumel

Cozumel Island Ocean Front Property 1/2 Mile South of Town. All Rooms with Individual A/C and Color Satellite TV. Huge Swimming Pool, Snorkeling, Deep Sea Fishing, World Class Beach or Boat Diving. Dive Operation Located on the premises. 3.5, or 7 Day Packages Available. 800-797-CLUB.

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#### Negril Scuba Centre-Jamaica

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#### Blue Whale Divers Ltd.-Jamaica

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#### Micronesia/South Pacific-Yap

**Manta Ray Bay Hotel & Yap Divers** Explore the Manta's Secret World. Treat yourself to 5 days of Diving with Yap Divers and 5 Luxurious Nights at the Manta Ray Bay Hotel. World Class Dive Sites Along 90 Miles of Virgin Reef. Call for Pkg Info. 800-DIVE-YAP

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#### Catalina-Scuba Outpost

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### US/Florida

#### Keys / Dry Tortugas

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#### Key West-Southpoint Divers

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<http://www.yachts.vi/>

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**Low Key Watersports, St. John, USVI**—PADI 5-star IDC facility. Beginners thru experts, student referrals, certification, rentals. Hotel packages available. Call: (800) 835-7718; (809) 693-8999

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## - FOR SALE -

**BAHAMAS**—Dive Shop Bahamas out island dive shop for sale. Turn Key, well known. 201-628-1190.  
**Belize Property-Unique Opportunity** Beach Front Island Living Caulker Caye, Belize. Minutes from the Best Diving in the Caribbean. • For Sale, Exchange or Joint Venture-perfect for a Small Hotel, Cabana, or Time-Share Project. Call Mark Bunch @ Miami South Properties, 501 West Clinch Ave, Knoxville, TN, 37902 Phone: 423-523-7375 Fax: 423-523-7415.

# THE WEB DIVER

## DIVE SITES

<http://www.coral.org>

**The Coral Reef Alliance**—make direct reports to the alliance on the state of the world's coral reefs and other cool stuff.

<http://www.naia.com/FJ/>

**Nai'a Cruises**—Luxury Live-aboard in Fiji. Dream Dive Vacation.

<http://www.divxprt.com/see/sea>

**See & Sea Travel**—the latest trips to a whole plethora of exotic destinations from one of the most experienced in the business

<http://www.rupel@btl.net>

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**Landfall Productions**—All the latest exotic trips and prices, plus some good photography

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**Down Under Divers**—all the latest on the Great Barrier Reef from the folks in Cairns, Queensland. G'day!

**And the local favorite (of course):**  
**www.divetravel.com**

<http://www.maui.net/~robinson/erda.html>

**Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures**—the latest on the local island scene from one of the most respected insiders.

<http://ella.netpoint.net/empg/trip-n-tour/>

**Trip-n-Tour**—Dedicated to only Micronesia.

<http://www.maui.net/~scuba/>

**Extended Horizons**—Dive with Local Eric Stein



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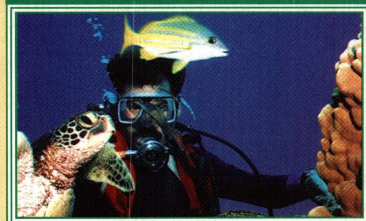
## KAUAI



**Nitrox Tropical Divers** is Kauai's first & only Enriched Air Training Facility. Enjoy a Scooter Dive & earn the PADI DPV Specialty! This PADI International Resort offers intro & night diving, referrals, computers, u/w cameras, Genesis tanks, 24-hour fills, beach toys & rentals, resort combo-packages. At Kalapaki Beach near the Marriott.

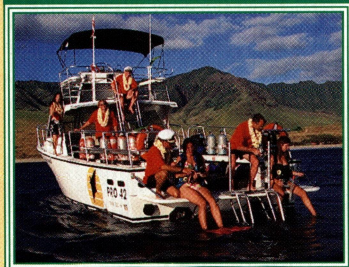
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**Beach Divers Hawaii** is a PADI 5 Star IDC providing the full range of scuba services including hotel bookings. 12 divers max. on board their Pro 42 Jet Boat built for twenty. West side of Oahu diving.

Call from 7 am until 10 pm on their  
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## BIG ISLAND

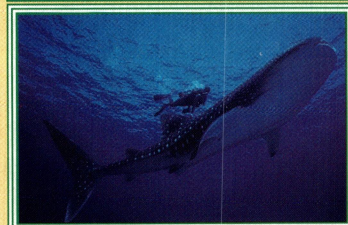


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## MAUI



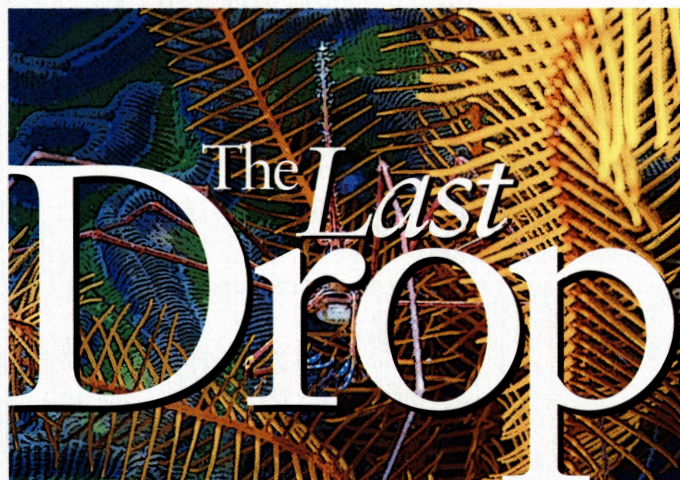
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**LET'S GO DIVING!**





Arrow Crab, photo by Mark Byrne, digital effects by Bonnie Pelnar

A picture is worth a thousand words, or so the saying goes, but sometimes a few figures are worth a thousand pictures...

- Number of travelers to the U.S. in 1994: **45.5 million**
- From Europe: **8.5 million**
- From the Far East: **5.8 million**
- From Canada: **14.9 million**
- From Mexico: **11.3 million**
- From the Caribbean: **1.1 million**



- Number of air passengers in the U.S. in 1994: **528 million**
- Airline operating profits in 1994: **\$2.7 billion** (up from \$1.4 billion in 1993)



- Number of travelers to Kenya per year: **800,000**
- Percentage of those visitors who are American: **11 percent**
- Annual earnings from tourism in Kenya: **\$400 million** (with earnings steadily increasing)
- In 1995, Kenyan life expectancy at birth: **52 years**
- Percentage of Kenya's labor force working in agricultural labor: **75-80 percent**
- Percentage of Kenya's population 15 years and over who can read and write: **71 percent**



- Gross Domestic Product of the Seychelles: **\$430 million**
- The Seychelles national product per capita in 1993: **\$6000**
- Number of telephones in the Seychelles in 1993: **13,000**
- Number of airports in the Seychelles: **14**
- Airports with paved runways over 2400 m: **1**
- Airports with unpaved runways: **2**



- Miles of coastline in the Federated States of Micronesia: **3667**
- In 1995, life expectancy at birth in Micronesia: **68 years**

- Gross Domestic Product of the U.S. in 1994: **\$6.74 trillion**
- The U.S. national product per capita in 1994: **\$25,850**
- Number of telephones in the U.S.: **126 million**
- Number of cellular phones: **7.5 million**
- Number of airports in the U.S.: **15,032**
- Airports with paved runways over 3000 m: **181**
- Airports with unpaved runways: **1918**



- Miles of coastline in the Bahamas: **2125**
- In 1995, life expectancy at birth in the Bahamas: **72 years**
- Percentage of Bahamian labor force employed by the government: **30 percent**
- Percentage of Bahamian population 15 years and over who can read and write: **90 percent**



- Miles of coastline in Canada: **146,275**
- In 1995, life expectancy at birth in Canada: **78 years**
- Percentage of the population 15 years and over who can read and write: **97 percent**
- Miles of pipeline for crude and refined oil in Canada: **14,138**
- Number of times the Canadian pipeline could circle the Bahamian coastline: **7**



- In 1988, the amount of oil spilled by the fuel barge *Nestucca* in Grays Harbor, Washington: **800 tons**
- Number of seabirds killed by the *Nestucca* spill: **13,000**
- In 1989, the amount of oil spilled by the supertanker *Exxon Valdez* in Prince William Sound, Alaska: **40,000 tons**
- Number of seabirds killed by the *Exxon Valdez* spill: **600,000**
- Number of sea otters killed by the *Exxon Valdez* spill: **5,500**



- Percentage of oil that crews can expect to remove from an oil spill: **5-10 percent**

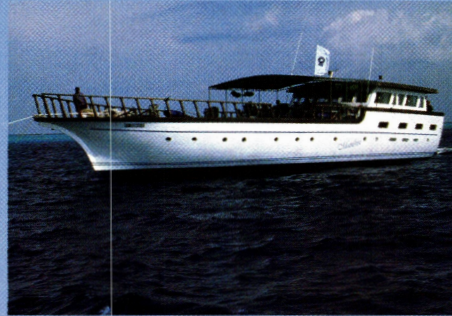
Sources: *The Tourism Works for America Report*, 1995 Special Edition; *Conde Nast Traveler*; *The World Factbook* 1995; Kenya Tourist Board; *Science and Technology: The Emerald Sea*, by Dale Sanders and Diane Swanson



# TROPICAL ADVENTURES

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| With Airfare | \$3625 |

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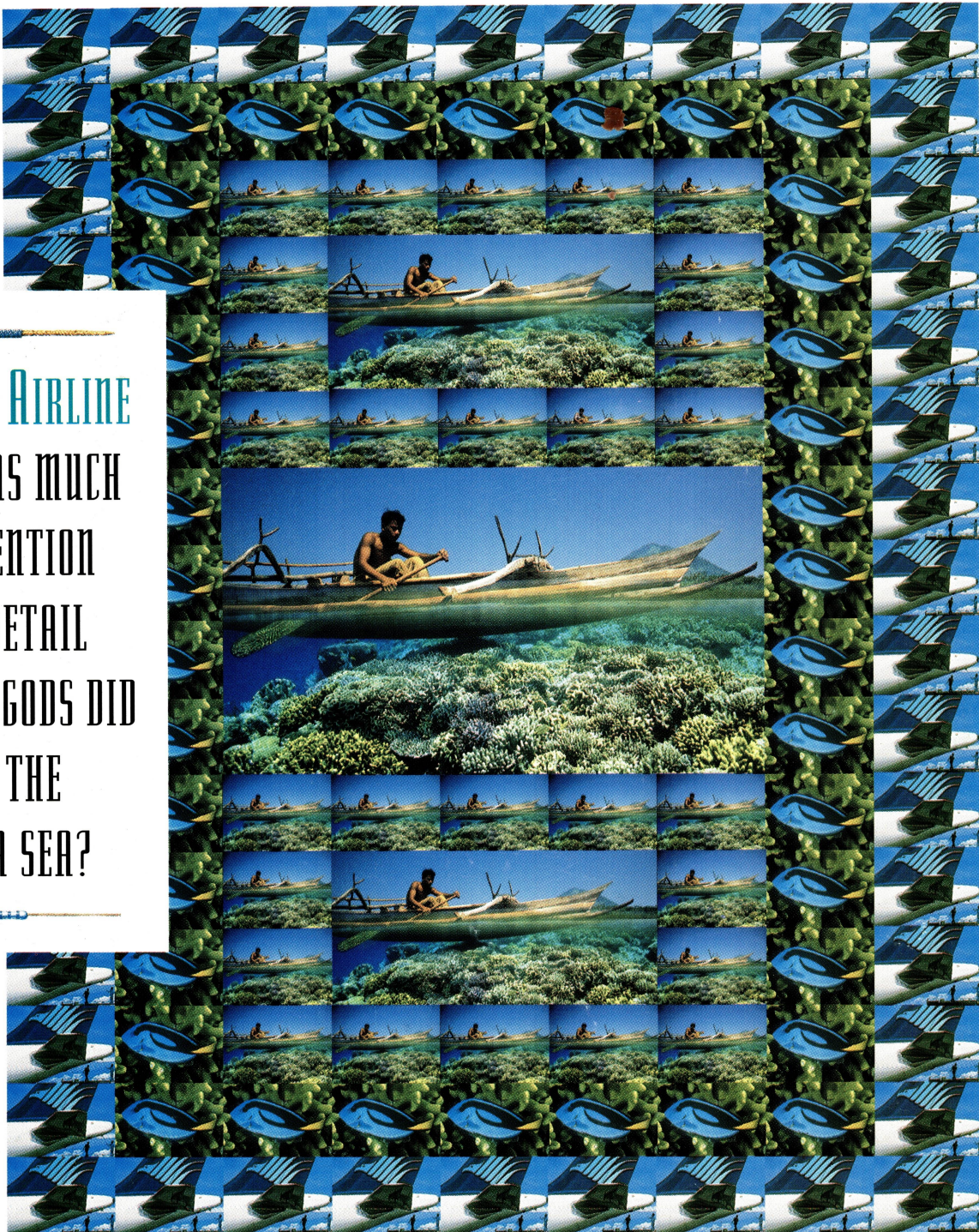
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